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Vinca minor

LESSER PERIWINKLE is an evergreen subshrub. Native to Europe and western Asia it has bluish-purple, mauve or white flowers with a whitish central star.

It is also known as Band plant, *Barvínek menší* (Czech), *Blluaette* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Blue myrtle, *Brčál barvínek* (Czech), *Brčál menší* (Czech), Common periwinkle, *Congossa* (Portuguese), Creeping myrtle, Cut finger, Dwarf periwinkle, Early-flowering periwinkle, Flower of death, Grave myrtle, *Gravmyrten* (Swedish), Ground myrtle, Hundred eyes, *Immergrün* (German), Joy-of-the-ground, *Kleines Immergrün* (German), Lady's flower, *Maagdenpalm* (Dutch), *Merisor* (Rumanian), Myrtle, Periwinkle, *Perfagl* (Welsh), *Pervenche* (French), *Pervinca* (Portuguese, Spanish), *Petite pervenche* (French), Running myrtle, *Sinngröna* (Swedish), Small periwinkle, Trailing myrtle, *Vanlig vintergröna* (Swedish), *Vinca* (Danish, English), *Vintergröna* (Swedish), Wintergreen, and *Zimozeleň menší* (Slovak); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of early friendship, harmony, and pleasures of memory (white).

The flowers are pollinated by long-tongued bees.

Warning – all parts of the plant are poisonous although it is believed to be safe if used in small amounts.

Minor means 'smaller or lesser'.

Lesser periwinkle was once considered to have magical properties.

In the past a garland of lesser periwinkle was placed on children's coffins which may explain why in Italy it was called the 'Flower of death'.

Its medicinal uses are similar to those of greater periwinkle but the latter has been preferred except it would seem for the treatment of diabetes and some skin diseases. (Apparently garters made from lesser periwinkle were worn round the calf of the leg as a cramp preventative in the 16th Century.) Today lesser periwinkle can be used in some proprietary medicines (but less often than greater periwinkle, *Vinca major*).

The blue flower is the birthday flower for 18th August.