

*Anemone nemorosa*

[Synonyms : *Anemanthus nemorosus*, *Anemonanthea nemorosa*, *Anemone intermedia*, *Anemone nemorosa* forma *vulgaris*, *Anemone nemorosa-alba*, *Anemone pentaphylla*, *Anemone ranunculoidi-nemorosa*, *Anemonoides nemorosa*]

**WOOD ANEMONE** is a perennial. Native to the Caucasus, Europe (including Britain), Japan and Korea, it has glossy white flowers with many yellow stamens.

It is also known as American wood anemone, *Anémone des bois* (French), *Anémônes du bouvais* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Animône* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Blodyn y Gwynt* (Welsh), Bow bells, Bread and cheese and cider, *Busch-Windröschen* (German), Candlemas caps, Chimney smocks, Crowfoot, Cuckoo, Cuckoo flower, Cuckoo-spit, Darn grass, Drops of snow, Easter flower, European wood anemone, Evening twilight, Fairies' windflower, Flower of death, Grandmother's nightcap, Granny's nightcap, Granny-thread-the-needle, *Gwyntai* (Welsh), Jack o' lantern, Lady's milkcans, Lady's nightcap, Lady's petticoat, Lady's purse, Lady's shimmy, Milkmaids, Moggie nightgown, Moll o' the woods, Moonflower, Nancy, *Nedcullion* (Irish Gaelic), Nemony, Nightcaps, Old woman's nest, Shame-faced maiden, Shoes and slippers, Silver bells, Smell fox, Smell smock, Snake flower, Snakes and adders, Snake's eyes, Soldiers, Soldier's buttons, Star-of-Bethlehem, *Valkovuokko* (Finnish), *Vitsipa* (Swedish), *Vitsippa* (Swedish), White soldiers, Wild jessamine, Windflower, Wind plant, Wood crowfoot, and Woolly heads; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of brevity, expectation, and forlornness.

The flowers (which have little scent) open in the sun and close and droop in rainy weather or at night.

Warning – the whole plant (particularly the leaves and sap) is poisonous for humans and can cause a burning sensation in the mouth and throat, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. It can also be poisonous for animals which normally avoid it because of the acrid taste.

*Nemorosa* is derived from Latin *nemus* (gladed woodland, grove, forest) meaning 'of woods, groves or open glades'.

For the ancient Egyptians the wood anemone was an emblem of sickness, and it is still called the 'Flower of Death' by the Chinese. While the Romans viewed the first wood anemones they picked from the wild as charms against fever.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century both the Greek physician, Dioscorides and his Roman peer, the celebrated natural historian, Pliny (23-79) declared their faith in therapeutic properties then ascribed to wood anemone. The former recommended it in external treatments for eye inflammation and ulcers. The latter believed in its healing powers for swollen gums and toothache.

Despite the fact that its faded appearance made it an unlucky emblem for some people, for others wood anemone was believed to have magical, protective and healing qualities provided that for the latter purpose it had been collected correctly. When the first wood anemones appeared in the Spring these needed to be gathered while uttering the words  
I gather thee for a remedy against disease  
and then they were placed in a scarlet cloth. As soon as illness struck, this precious cloth would be secured under the arm or around the neck of the patient.

The plant is only eaten by animals when green food is scarce.  
Medicinally, herbalists recommended the wood anemone in eye ointments and in treatments for leprosy, fever, gout and headaches.