

## Tale from the Garden!

They are known as spring ephemerals, because they take advantage of the light that filters through to the forest floor before the foliage appears on the trees, and disappear later in the year. In this, they mimic their close relative, the lesser celandine which we looked at last week, by opening out their flowers in winter sunshine, reflecting light, then closing up again at dusk. I'm talking about the winter aconite, a whole blanket of which you can see in the garden of Levenside House.

Even snow does not deter the winter aconite. For the rest of the year, the plant hides beneath the leaf litter as a bulb, waiting for its moment of glory when everything else is still dormant. English woodland aconites (*Eranthis Hyemalis*) are a species of flowering plant in the buttercup family. These honey-scented flowers blanket the ground in a carpet of shimmering gold. Their upward-facing flowers greet you with a sunny golden yellow colour & are the brilliant midwinter counterpoint to the snowdrop's modest charm. They're one of the first signs of spring & are just the right choice for flower beds and borders, tubs, rockery gardens, woodland planting or under shrubs or trees.

It is a tuberous-rooted herbaceous-perennial growing to 15cm (6 in), with large (2–3cm) yellow, cup-shaped flowers held above a collar of 3 leaf-like bracts. They naturalize easily by self-seeding and will continue to reward you year after year. The bright green bracts that collar the yellow cupped flowers create an emerald Elizabethan ruff, inspiring the vernacular name of "choirboys". The ruff of leaves rather resembles the neckline of a choirboy's costume!



The Winter aconite, native to southern Europe, has been grown in British gardens as an ornamental since late in the sixteenth century, and was first recorded as naturalised in the British Isles in 1838.

According to Janet Hitchman's biography of the crime-writer Dorothy L. Sayers, when the 6-year-old Dorothy moved to her new home at Bluntisham Rectory in the Cambridgeshire Fens: 'As the fly turned up the drive she cried out with astonishment, "Look auntie, look! The ground is all yellow, like the sun." This sudden splash of gold remained in her memory all her life. The ground was carpeted with early flowering aconites. Later her father told her the legend that these flowers grew in England only where Roman soldiers have shed their blood, and Bluntisham actually contains the outworks of a Roman camp. So as early as this and as young as she was, her imagination was caught by ancient Rome.'

Another crime writer of the time, Margery Allingham, also referred to this legend. In 'The Oaken Heart: The Story of an English Village at War [1941], which is her account of living in Tolleshunt D'Arcy in North Essex in World War II (place names disguised in the book for censorship reasons), she writes: "There is a legend that aconites only flourish where Roman blood has been spilt, and if this is true there must have been a battle up there at the end of the Old Doctor's garden" (the Old Doctor being the previous owner of her house).'

'The ground is all yellow, like the sun' got me thinking about how seeing a 'blanket of shimmering gold' can lift your spirits & mood.

The colour gold is the colour of success, achievement and triumph. Gold is the colour of the winner - first place medals are always in gold, silver is second place. Associated with abundance and prosperity, luxury and quality, prestige and sophistication, value and elegance, the psychology of this colour implies affluence, material wealth and extravagance. Gold in its physical state, by its very nature, denotes wealth and prestige in every country, culture and market in the world today - it is probably the most valuable and easily traded commodity available in the global market place.

This colour is linked to masculine energy and the power of the sun, compared to silver which is associated with feminine energy and the sensitivity of the moon. Optimistic and positive, gold adds richness and warmth to everything with which it is associated - it illuminates and enhances other things around it.

In the meaning of colours, gold is generous and giving, compassionate and loving, the benefactor or patron, sharing its wisdom, knowledge and wealth with others. Confident, passionate and eye-catching, gold draws attention to itself. Gold is a warm colour that can be shiny, glistening and happy as well as dull, muted and traditional. The brighter shades of gold catch the eye with their brilliance while the darker muted shades are deep, warm and intense.

The colour yellow can symbolize happiness, positivity, and hope (think sunshine), so while the colour is often used to represent love, it may skew more toward feelings of friendship and joy as opposed to the romantic passion of a classic red heart. So instead of giving red roses to your loved one for Valentine's Day, the sunny colour of a yellow rose symbolizes friendship, and caring. In Victorian times, it symbolized jealousy. Today it is used to convey warmth and affection. It can mean familiar love and domestic happiness, as in the song, 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'.

Yellow and gold are also the colour of fire. Fire represents the presence of God (Deuteronomy 4:24 'For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. '; Hebrews 12:28-29 'Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. ') and God's refining process. Therefore, yellow represents the joy, the presence of God, and God's anointing, whereas gold represents God's holiness, divine nature, and his majesty.

How poignant are the words from this hymn by James Rowe, 'Live in the Sunshine of God's Love', especially after the year we've had & the times we live in:

1 If you would sing along life's way,  
And fearlessly your faith display;  
If you would help the Lord each day,  
Always live in the sunshine.

Refrain:

Always live in the sunshine,  
Gleaming from heav'n above;  
The blessed glorious sunshine,  
Of your Redeemer's love.

2 If you would comfort those who grieve,  
And weary, burdened souls relieve;  
If blessings rich you would receive,  
Always live in the sunshine.

[Refrain]

3 If you would make the world more bright  
By sending out the gospel light,  
And helping men to live aright,  
Always live in the sunshine.

[Refrain]

4 If daily you would grow in grace,  
And ev'ry doubt by faith replace,  
If you would see your Savior's face,  
Always live in the sunshine.

[Refrain]

And remember this: "Sunshine is to flowers, what God's love is to the soul." Leila Grandemange

Leila Grandemange is an author, encourager, and dog lover whose passion is to inspire comfort and joy, and the loving care of our furry friends! The author gives us great examples on how we can have a closer walk with God by following the lead that our pets give us in their everyday life. One of her books 'Pawz and Pray' encourages us to put our worry and anxiety aside and take time to enjoy the things God has put right in front of us. The same could be said for the flowers that grow in our gardens!