

Tale from the Garden!

As one of the most familiar signs of spring, primroses (or primula as they are also known) bring a sign of early cheer to the garden. Primroses flower reliably from January through to May and are one of the most attractive native wildflowers in Britain & Ireland. These easy-to-grow perennials provide a beautiful carpet of colour in a variety of forms and sizes to make an attractive feature of any area, from pots to borders and everything in between! They look great planted in clusters. Our roundabouts & street tubs are full of them at the moment (thanks to the happy planters from SPIOTA!)

They are one of the first woodland blooms. Found in the wild, particularly in hedgerows, the *Primula Vulgaris* is the most common variety of primula. It produces an abundance of pale delicate yellow flowers, with a deep yellow centre. Its flowers form in a rosette of simple leaves sitting among its foliage. Fantastic for early pollinators, it is sure to attract bees, butterflies and other insects to your garden.

As part-shade lovers, primulas are fantastic when planted underneath shrubs and trees. They are also very adaptable and good at acclimatising, so will tolerate a cool sunny spot too. Primulas fit perfectly with naturalistic planting schemes such as cottage gardens, rock gardens or wildflower meadows. If you prefer a mixed border, primroses grow well with narcissi (daffodils), which have a similar flowering time. Or, to introduce more colour and fragrance, they look stunning with *Viola Adornata* ('Sweet violet') which is a small but strongly scented blue flower that grows in similar woodland conditions to the primula.



The name 'Primrose' derives from the Latin for 'first rose', although it does not belong to the rose family. The Latin word 'Primus' means 'first'. In Greek this flower is called 'Primeol', in French it is called 'Primeverole', & in the Italian language it is known as 'Primeverola' meaning the first spring flower. In Scotland the Primrose is called the 'May Spink', 'May Floore', 'Pink', 'Pinkie', 'Faulie Pumrose', 'Buckie Faalie', 'Maisie Spink', 'Meysie Spink', 'Faulie Pumrock' & 'Pimrose'!!!!

Chaucer refers to it in "The Miller's Tale," and refers to a fine lady as a 'Prime Robe'.

In Roman legend, it was given in memoriam to the youth Paralisos, who was the son of Priapus and Flora. When Paralisos's lover Melicenta died, he died shortly afterwards. So his parents gave the Primrose to the earth as an act of remembrance.

In some areas of Britain it is called "Fairy Cups," due to the superstition that fairies shelter in them on rainy days. According to Scottish legend, a bunch of five flowers which are growing beside water is said to open the gateway to Fairy land if they are placed on a magical Standing Stone. Also in Scotland the Primrose is associated with safety posies which are left on the door step to encourage Fairies to bless the house and anyone living in it. There is an account of bunches of Primroses being left in the cowshed to convince the fairies not to steal the milk!

The Primrose is associated with St Bride/ the Goddess Brigid/ Bride (the Celtic Goddess of Rebirth and Renewal); the flowers were gathered as a gift to her on St Bride's day, 1st February. This date is also when the ancient Celtic festival of Imbolc takes place. From the last corn sheaf from last year's harvest, they made a figure of a woman which they then dressed with shells, crystals, Primroses, Snowdrops and any other greenery they found. It was carried in procession, with the young girls dressed in white with their hair loose which symbolised youth and purity.

The Primrose, even as far back as ancient times, was known for its healing properties: in England, young leaves are eaten in spring as a salad, and roots are used as a spice; in Germany, dried flowers are used as nerve-fortifying tea, mixed with wine; in Russia, the Primrose was considered a flower of vigour and health. Did you know - one primrose leaf makes up the body's daily need for Vitamin C!

Since the plant blooms in the spring, the primrose is often poetically called the golden keys to the whole green kingdom of the summer. The keys, the keys ...

In some areas of Germany, these are the keys to marriage. It was believed that the girl who was the first to find the primrose flower for the Easter holidays would be sure to get married in the same year.

Many legends spawned a love of primrose. The most famous says that once, when the Apostle Peter, the guardian of the heavenly monastery, dozed off, he dropped the keys to Paradise. Once on the ground, they sprouted amazingly beautiful flowers - these were the Primrose.

April the 19th is Primrose Day - it is the anniversary of the death in 1881 of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, as the flower was his favourite. Queen Victoria sent a wreath of primrose flowers to Disraeli's funeral.

On Easter Day we celebrated the re-opening of our church doors for worship. From Monday 12th April it will feel like a golden key has unlocked us from even more of the restrictions imposed upon us because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year's celebration of Easter was unlike any other. Most of us spent Easter either alone or with a few family members, tuning in to our online worship services & Holy Week reflections. Many of us are carrying deep sorrow, worry, and concern about the health and wellness of our family members, friends and neighbours. But despite our difficult and current circumstances of life, there is a lot we can learn from this more subdued Easter.

GOD USES LOCKED DOORS TO HELP US GROW IN FAITH ...

The story of Christ's resurrection and other stories in the Bible are filled with closed doors. It is a common phrase in the resurrection narratives: "the doors being shut for fear of the Jews." It led them all to hide behind closed doors. God may have closed the door temporarily, but it doesn't mean that it will stay closed forever. Sometimes God may want to redirect us to something better or something He feels we need more of at that moment. We are to trust God in these moments and wait to see where He leads us and what **new doors may open**. A closed door may be God's way of refocusing our attention toward Him.

Doors! We encounter them each and every day of our lives. It is practically impossible to go throughout the day without walking through a door. Some doors are closed, which means we must reach down, turn the doorknob, and open the door before walking through it. Some doors are locked, which requires us to have the key if we want to enter through the passageway. The same situation applies to the spiritual realm, and it can be used symbolically, referring to life's opportunities and blessings. There are times we try and try to accomplish something, taking advantage of an opportunity, but it doesn't work out. No matter what we do, it seems the door is closed on us. We can't get through!

In this weekend's gospel, the disciple Thomas refused to believe that Jesus had come back to life until he personally saw him and touched his fatal wounds. Jesus then appeared in the living flesh to Thomas and the disciples and submitted to a probing physical examination. Jesus came among the fearful disciples and said, "Peace be with you." This peace was not so much a state of mind as it was a state of being.

When Jesus unlocked the doors of the disciples' hearts, they became emboldened to him and stepped outside of their comfort zones, came out from behind their locked doors to fearlessly and courageously proclaim the Gospel to all who were lost. We all have our locked doors of desperation and futility. I wonder what has been **unlocked** and **opened** for you and me during this Easter Season. God uses locked doors to help us grow in faith. Locked doors become God's agents of change.

Faith is our 'golden key' to every new change we encounter. The Roadmap to normality isn't finished yet & we will still come to certain doors that are locked. May we remember that there is a key to every situation, a solution to every problem. May we never surrender to one of life's locked doors. Instead, may we pray until we find the right key to open that door. God knows exactly what we need & what doors we need to open or enter. He will show us those doors. If we trust God with every detail of our lives, He will present us with that 'golden key' to help us walk through the door of faith.

As we move onwards, along the 'roadmap to normality', take heart from the Primrose & look forward to the whole green kingdom of the summer.