

Tale from the Garden!

This month, we see the crossover from winter into spring and, with this change, we welcome in warmer temperatures, longer days and, of course, beautiful spring flowers. With colourful foliage, comes the amazing wildlife that help keep our planet in balance. Bees will begin pollinating flowers and birds start returning from southerly migrations to populate our outdoor spaces once again—something no gardener wants to miss out on!



“Scilla, Scilla, tell me true,
Why are you so very blue?”
Oh, I really cannot say
Why I’m made this lovely way!
I might know, if I were wise.
Yet - I’ve heard of seas and skies,
Where the blue is deeper far
Than our skies of Springtime are.
P’r’aps I’m here to let you see
What that Summer blue will be.
When you see it, think of me!

SCILLA SIBERICA

This delightful bulbous perennial is perfect for bringing spring colour into the garden and its small blue flowers provide a similar aesthetic to bluebells, which appear on woodland floors later in April. The erect stems, racemes and bowl-shaped flowers are more unique and are instantly recognisable as a plant that oozes its own remarkable character.

The name ‘*Scilla siberica*’ suggests that the plant hails from Siberia but it is actually native to the warmer climates found in Crimea (near Ukraine) and Northwest Iran. It is hardy to most weather conditions across the UK. *Scilla siberica* (Siberian Squill) is also known as “The Survivor”. With its small, bell-shaped blue blossoms surrounded by grey-green leaves like tiny spears, Siberian squill is a woodland flower that thrives in cold climates and can endure long winters (it even thrives north of the Arctic circle!).

Scilla siberica bulbs should be planted in early autumn in a fertile soil of loam, sand or chalk. Ensure the soil is well drained and place it in a position of full sun or partial shade. It is the perfect plant to add spring colour to borders, cottage and rock gardens and will also thrive when planted in grass. Its nodding blue heads give an immediate impression of calm and cool. A lush carpet of squill can transform the empty space under a tree into an idyllic spot to read a book or compose a verse or two.

The Flower Sermon: When One Blossom is Worth 10,000 Words

In Buddhist tradition, Gautama once preached what is known as the “Flower Sermon,” which consisted of simply holding up a single flower and saying not one word. Through this silent, direct pointing to reality, one of his disciples instantly attained enlightenment. It was this disciple who went on to bring Buddhism to China and so became the first patriarch of Zen.

Jesus, too, preached a Flower Sermon: “See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these” (Matthew 6:29). Interestingly,

scholars have determined that the lilies Jesus knew were not the large opulent white flowers we associate with Easter, but rather were common wildflowers similar to buttercups.

Has the Holy Spirit ever preached a flower sermon to you? You could be sitting outside on your patio, having your morning quiet time, when your gaze focuses on a single one of the flowers in your garden, a bright blue one. This little flower is so beautiful, so perfect, and yet it isn't doing anything except gazing at the sun and drinking in its light. And right there is the message - all God wants of us is to look at Him, to bask in His presence and absorb His light. When sitting with the flowers we can enter into the Lord's presence and receive all we need for facing life's challenges.

The fact is, flowers will continue to preach to us. During Easter, for example, all through Passion Week, you might be drawn to the magnolia in your back garden & marvel at the gradual eruption of huge pink blossoms. Where does it come from, all this beauty and colour and glory? Seeing the emergence of flowers reminds us of the new life of the Resurrection & Easter Sunday.

Perhaps on another occasion you might notice a strikingly blue flower growing just outside the border of your garden - one rogue flower flourishing where it shouldn't have been, sprouting from a crack between two stones on the path. How did it get there? How it speaks to us: the pure, delicate blueness of that blossom, like a fleck of summer sky fallen to earth! A line from a hymn comes to mind: "God paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star." We can extract a moral from this story of the lone rogue flower that was more beautiful than any of those in the garden: maybe something about the gift that outsiders bring to our society, or about the value of colouring outside the lines, etc.

But with flower sermons, it's probably best not to try to derive any lesson, but just to let the flowers be flowers, and look and listen. They will speak to us.

Colours, like numbers, have significant meaning in the Bible. Understanding what different colours symbolize can help us gain a deeper understanding of Scripture and give us revelation in our faith walk.

Blue in the Bible represents the heavens and the Word of God. In Exodus, when Moses, his sons, and 70 elders of Israel went up to Mount Sinai to worship God, they saw God and described the pavement under His feet as being bright as the blue sky (Exodus 24 v10 'Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.'). Following this encounter, Moses received the 10 commandments.

Blue is translated in Hebrew as '*tekelet*'. *Tekelet* was the colour assigned for priest's clothing, in particular, their hems (Exodus 28 v5-6). In Luke 8 v40-48, the woman with the issue of blood was healed by our High Priest, Jesus Christ, when she touched the hem of His garment. Therefore, blue is also accredited with being the colour of God's healing and grace. We just have to watch the news at the moment, see the terrible things happening in the Ukraine & know the world is a broken place - it needs healing.

When you look at the blue of the seas, the blue of the skies, think of the Scilla Siberica & imagine the blue of the summer to come.