

Common name Wood Anemone or Wind Flower

Latin Name *Anemone nemorosa*

Family Ranunculaceae

This is one of the earliest of our spring flowers and if you come to the Dell in late March early April this flower cannot be mistaken as it is the only white one you will see.



This plant is very seldom seen singly because of the way their roots form and generally grow in colonies in the moist soil of wood

The deeply-cut leaves and star-like flowers rise directly from it on separate un-branched stems.

As in all the Anemones, they do not have true petals, and what looks like petals are really sepals, (Sepals are the part of a flower, usually green, that surrounds and protects the flower in bud. They are actually modified leaves, and are collectively known as the calyx.



In some plants like the wood anemone the sepals change colour and become petal-like, taking over the role of attracting insects to the flower so that they can be pollinated.

There are six sepals, pure white on the upper surfaces and pale rose-coloured underneath.

On sunny days you will find them wide open to the sun, but as evening approaches they close up and droop

their heads so that they do not get damp inside. If rain threatens in the daytime, it does the same.

Though the Wood Anemone looks so pure and innocent it is poisonous. So that in some cultures they are seen as the emblem of death!

However, the Romans picked the first Anemones as a charm against fever, saying, 'I gather this against all diseases,' and tied it round the invalid's neck. In Greek mythology it sprang from the tears of Venus, as she wandered through the woodlands weeping for the death of her lover the beautiful Adonis.

#### What it was used for in the past

In times gone by herbalists recommended application of various parts of the plant for headaches, tertian agues and rheumatic gout. Culpepper says:

'The body being bathed with the decoction of the leaves cures the leprosy: the leaves being stamped and the juice snuffed up the nose purgeth the head mightily; so doth the root, being chewed in the mouth, for it procureth much spitting and bringeth away many watery and phlegmatic humours, and is therefore excellent for the lethargy.... Being made into an ointment and the eyelids annointed with it, it helps inflammation of the eyes. The same ointment is excellent good to cleanse malignant and corroding ulcers.'

Culpepper also advises the roots to be chewed because it 'purgeth the head mightily'; he adds, 'And when all is done let physicians prate what they please, all the pills in the dispensary purge not the head like to hot things held in the mouth.'



Though we would strongly recommend non of these uses, being that the plant is actually poisonous!

### Sources

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