

Common Name: **Cornflower**

Genus: *Centaurea*

Species: *cyanus*

Family: Asteraceae

AKA: Hurt-sickle, Blew Bottle, Bluebow, Blue Cap, Bachelor's Button



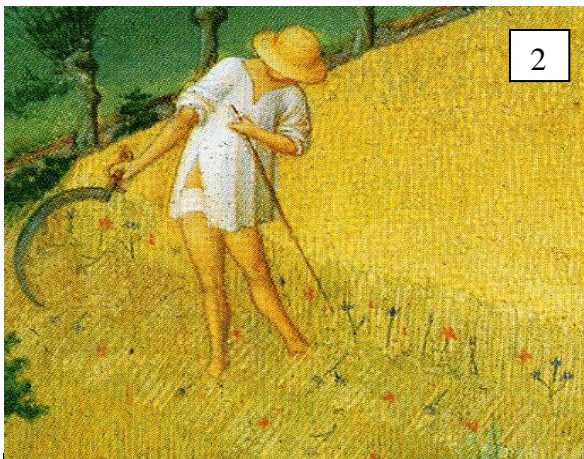
Historical Uses:

Medical: “Let whoever has a broken bone anywhere in the body drink cornflower or its root often either in wine or in water; the broken bone will heal. Let the person warm cornflower in water, squeeze out the water, place it often warm over the broken bone. Massage the place with it, and it will be healed.”(1)

“The faculties of these floures are not yet sufficiently knowne. Sith there is no use of them in physicke, we will leave the rest that might be said to a further consideration: notwithstanding some have thought the common Blew-bottle to be of temperate something cold, and therefore good against the inflammation of the eyes, as some thinke.”(2)

“Being taken in the water of the plantain, horse-tail, or the great comfrey, it is a remedy against the poison of the scorpion, and resisteth all venoms and poisons. The juice put into green wounds, doth quickly solder up the lips of them together. The juice dropped into the eyes taketh away the heat and inflammation of them.”(3)

Culinary: Flower petals used in salads.(4)



Harvesting grain circa 1400-1450. Note cornflower and corn poppy in the field.

Folklore/Astrology: “Warm and dry. Under the domain of Saturn. When burned it drives away snakes.” (5) “The genus name was taken from the Centaur, Chiron, who shared with mankind the value of healing herbs.”(6)

Other: Name derives from the fact that these flowers were often found in corn fields. “Corn”, in this case being grain (European usage), most often wheat or oats.

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Flowers, cut as they open and dried whole or as florets.(7)

Medicinal: An astringent herb that reduces inflammation. Externally for corneal ulcers, conjunctivitis, minor wounds, or mouth ulcers.(8)

Culinary: Fresh flower petals are used in salads.

Economic: Extracts of cornflower are included in hair rinses and shampoos. Flowers may also be included in dry form in sachets and potpourris.



Area of Origin: Europe and Mediterranean region

Plant type: Annual

Form: Tall, slender, upright

Height: 8" to 36"

Flower color: Blue, varies to near white to dark purple

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Well drained soil

Hardiness zone: Hardy annual

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed in fall or spring.

Cautions: Petal blight on flowers and rust on leaves may be a problem.



Sources

1. Von Bingen, p. 117
2. Gerard, p. 733-734
3. Culpeper, p. 26-27
4. Talbot/Whiteman, p. 92
5. Anderson, p. 70
6. Grieve, p. 223-224
7. Bown, p. 161-162
8. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

1. Shoffer Herbal 1485
2. Tres Riches Heures 15th cent.
3. PSUMG 2005
4. PSUMG 2005