

Common Name: Herb Robert or Stinking Robert, Death come-quickly, Bloodwort and Cuckoo's eye

Latin Name: *Geranium robertianum*

Family Name: Geraniaceae

Herb Robert is a spindly plant about 10-50cm in height. It is covered with silvery hairs, with dark to bright green finely divided leaves and reddish-tinged stems. Although the five petals are usually bright pink, white forms arise in some areas. It can either be an annual or biennial, and it flowers from May to December. The name geranium comes from the Greek '*geranus*' meaning 'crane so-called' because the seed heads resemble crane beaks, and a lot of our native geraniums are known as Cranesbills.



Herb Robert is common throughout Britain. It is shade loving and therefore is very happy in the woods at Healey Dell. Although it is pollinated by a range of insects, the flowers are also able to self-fertilise if they are not pollinated.

As you can see from its common names, this plant smells when the leaves are crushed, somewhat unpleasantly, of foxes!

In folklore it is the plant belonging to Robin Goodfellow (the name Robin is a shortened version of Robert). It is said in folklore that:

When red-stalked Herb Robert is in bloom, you should be careful how you treat it. For to wantonly destroy the flower, which is under the protection of Robin Goodfellow, (the household protector who was also known as 'Puck' - derived from the Old English Pucelas, 'wild men of the woods'), is to court disaster. Treat the flower well and it will help you to staunch wounds; treat Robin well and he will help you with your housework. So was the belief of the country folk in the centuries up to and perhaps into the nineteenth century. It is usual that flowers named Robin have associations with devils, death and fairies.

From-<http://www.tellinghistory.co.uk/resources/mff.htm>



Barred Carpet Moth

What other animals use it?

It is the food plant of bees, long-tongued hoverflies and the Barred Carpet moth.



Hoverfly

What it was used for in the past

Herb Robert's other local names, including 'bloodwort', show that it was used in past medicinally to staunch blood-flow. Additionally, the leaves could be rubbed onto the skin in order to repel biting insects. The plant has been used to obtain a brown dye. Recent research has shown that the plant may lower blood sugar levels, and so it has potential as a treatment for diabetes.

Sources

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