

Certainly Gentian flowers only open when conditions are favourable; on a cool, dull day they remain closed. That can mean a long waiting period (and thus a long flowering period) in an English summer.

Gentian is pollinated by insects which push their way through the fringe of pale hairs in the throat of the flower. The pistil is longer than the anthers, and as the insects struggle to climb into the bell of the flower they dust pollen on to the style. On their way out they pick up new pollen to carry on to the next stop. The upright position of the flower presents a landing pad for those flying in: Gentian has a precise system for pollination and it demonstrates a strong link to the world and the future.

The flowers remain attached after flowering, although they wither somewhat and fade. As the seedpod develops, the petals and sepals provide protection. This is important for a plant where the seeds ripen late in the year. This speaks of Gentian's tenacity, holding to a life purpose (see *Scleranthus* page 120). Gentian people appear to give up easily and become despondent, but the flower says just the reverse. It says hold on, keep making the effort. Visually, the effect can be disconcerting since the old flower pods look like yellowed buds. At first glance it appears that the flowers have yet to open or that they have given up and dried on the stem.

The seeds are many and small; some are distributed by grazing animals but most fall at the foot of the parent plant when it is shaken by the wind. Consequently, Gentian grows as a scattered colony. Since it is a hilltop plant, it spreads down the slope for as long as conditions remain favourable, edging its way into a field below if the farmer does not cultivate the headland. But it is the view from the hilltop which allows Gentian types to take a higher perspective on life's difficulties: 'often they desire things to go too much their own way, instead of seeing the bigger outlook'.²⁷ This bigger picture can only be seen from high ground. Sitting with this plant on the chalk downs, it is easier to see our place in the world. And while the little Gentian is often burned off in a dry summer or trodden under foot on the pilgrim's path, it has a strength of purpose to keep on going and do really well.

Bach had first seen Gentian growing on the Chilterns, but it was in Kent, on the North Downs, that he actually made the remedy. Weeks tells us that he went back there in the following summer to find Rock Rose.²⁸ But Rock Rose must have been flowering when he was in the Chilterns the previous year. He saw it but did not recognize its significance until

Rock Rose



later. This is not a criticism but an observation of the complexities Bach experienced in selecting the twelve basic type remedies. It was made more difficult by the fact that, to all appearances, Rock Rose is less of a soul type and more of a 'situation' remedy.

Weeks says that Bach was looking for a plant which carried the same instantaneous healing power which he himself could sometimes bring to people, calming them when they were in deep distress. He had wanted to show people they had the same ability, but he did not know how. So he went looking for a plant, 'a material agent, a herbal remedy which would act in the same manner'.²⁹ This remedy was to be Rock Rose, for 'those in absolute despair, in terror: who feel that you can bear nothing more; terrified . . .'.³⁰ Yet Rock Rose is the twelfth remedy and a soul type just like the others. Bach gave it the soul qualities of Terror and Courage.

How can terror be one of the 'twelve primary types of personality'?³¹ Indeed, among the majority of people using Bach's remedies today Rock Rose is seen as only a treatment for acute fear, panic or distress (he called it 'the rescue remedy').³² While it does work in that way, it also has a deeper resonance with a certain type of person: one who lives life mutely under the intense pressure of fear. When this fear is overcome, perhaps such people are able to help calm the distress of others, just as Bach anticipated. It is a particular kind of fear, however, not the nervous fear of *Mimulus* but rather a deeply hidden fear of life itself. Being hidden it is perhaps hard for others to recognize. Like the secrets of the twelfth house in astrology, the Rock Rose secret is not apparent to the outer world. Only those who resonate with the blind panic of the Rock Rose soul will recognize its quality.

The Little Mermaid by Hans Andersen is a fairy tale which illustrates aspects of the Rock Rose soul condition. A mermaid falls in love with a prince after she saves his life during a storm at sea. She decides to leave her own family and go to live on land in the hope that the prince will love her in return, and thereby she will gain an immortal soul. She visits the sea witch who agrees to make her a potion which will give her human legs to replace her mermaid's fish-tail, but on certain conditions. With her legs she will be the most graceful dancer but each step will pain her as if she is treading upon sharp knives. Then, if the prince marries another, her heart will break and she will dissolve into foam on the water. Lastly, in payment, she must give to the witch the best thing she has: her beautiful voice.

'If you take away my voice,' says the little mermaid, 'what will remain to me?'

'Your beautiful form,' replied the witch, 'your graceful walk and your sparkling eyes: with those you can take captive a human heart . . .'

With great courage the mermaid agrees; the witch cuts out her tongue and gives her a potion. Once on land, in the human world, she drinks the potion. It pains her, burning like fire, cutting like swords, and she falls down in a swoon. She is found on the seashore by the prince who shelters and protects her. She lives in the palace and goes everywhere with him around the kingdom, always in hope and always in pain. In the end the prince falls in love and marries a princess; the mermaid, as was foretold, becomes sea-foam and as pure spirit travels the world.

The story may be interpreted in different ways; the sexual inference is obvious enough. But consider the possible symbolism of the soul incarnating in the physical world. This is the stated intent for the little mermaid; she wants an immortal soul, a human soul; she has lived at the bottom of the sea for her first fifteen years, an innocent dreaming of life on earth. And then, when her opportunity comes, it calls for intense courage, brings constant pain which she cannot avoid if she is to fulfil her life aim (to marry the prince) and leaves her mute, unable to tell her story or, more importantly, to sing the beautiful song of her being. It all points to the soul circumstances of the Rock Rose.

Rock Rose has had a variety of Latin names but is now generally called *Helianthemum nummularium*, the flower of the sun, like gold coins. The golden-yellow flowers are round and flat, lying on the ground like scattered gold pieces that have fallen among the grass. The five-petalled flowers are notably frail with an appearance like creased silk or crumpled tissue paper. They last only a day and the petals quickly fall. It is the extreme delicacy of the petals which shows the tenuous, febrile nature of the Rock Rose type, who have such a loose grip upon life—Bach said that this is the remedy to use when there is an accident, emergency or intense fear in both the patient and the people around. The soul type lives with such a fear throughout life. The strength and hope come from the golden light of the sun, which is reflected in the golden light of the flowers. They bring courage, fortitude and the brave will to win.

The plant is perennial, growing low to the ground in a massed clump. The sprawling stems are thin and woody with small, dark green leaves in opposite pairs. Rock Rose is evergreen: the leaves stay on the plant



throughout the year. The gesture here lacks the vertical, directed growth of the strong will and ego (see Vervain page 107, Impatiens page 43) which expresses a clear and individual purpose in life. Rather the spreading, horizontal growth holds to the earth (see Scleranthus pages 117–8). The Rock Rose souls endeavour to sustain their presence on earth; just existing is work enough. It is an undifferentiated life without the seasonal vertical growth and decline which is usual in plants.



Back of
Rock Rose flower

The flowering stems do rise vertically some eighty to one hundred millimetres from the mat of leaves, although the individual flowers, always at the top of the stem, turn 180 degrees to face the sun as they open. As buds they face downwards, but in the sun the stem flexes and turns the opening flower to face the sky. This remarkable reactive strength makes the plants like a weather vane: they hang their heads on a rainy morning but turn, like sunflowers, to face the sun if the skies clear. Rock Rose people have a similar watchful quality; always awake, always observing, always responsive to the environment of life. Like the little mermaid, watching her prince, they say little but see much, waiting for life to respond.

Rock Rose is a common enough plant on chalk and limestone soils and yet it attracts scant attention from botanical writers. G. Clarke Nuttall, one of the few to consider it at any length wrote:

Sensitive to a degree, the golden flower of the Rock Rose only attempts to face the world for one short day at most, and even during these few hours its blossoming will not unfold its delicate petals unless the sun be shining. . . . The crumpled look is due to the way in which the petals are folded up in the bud, for there, instead of being neatly pleated or rolled, they are—to quote an old writer's succinct description—'cramb'd up within the Empalement (i.e. calyx) by hundreds of little Wrinkles or Puckers; it is as if Three or Four fine Cambrick Hankerchiefs were thrust into one's pocket'. And they never get properly smoothed out afterwards.³³

More generally it has been noticed that when the flower first opens the stamens crowd close to the stigma but that any light touch (from an insect seeking pollen, for instance) makes them fan apart. This 'irritability' as it is called is distinctly unusual in plants and it is not easily explained. While there may be some benefit here in discouraging self-pollination³⁴ it is, perhaps, another demonstration of how the Rock Rose soul type interacts and responds to the world around. Rock Rose is singularly sensitive.

Sensitivity has been linked to the hairy leaves of some plants (page 95). Rock Rose does indeed have a hairy leaf, but the leaf form is simple, ovate and plain. It is a little unusual—hairy and dark green above yet grey and downy beneath. Does this signal a kind of vulnerability? The sepals which surround the bud are also hairy; after the petals have fallen they quickly close up again and protect the seedpod which swells within. The seeds fall from the pod and may be blown or washed downhill to germinate in the spring. Extraordinarily, Rock Rose seeds are often taken by ants³⁵ into their nest where they are stored, presumably as food. Some that are dropped on the way into the nest germinate in the loose soil which the ants scatter from their excavations. Rock Rose, in consequence, can often be found growing on a tump—the old mound of an ant colony. The germinating seed puts down a quick and deeply-diving root. The root system of a grown plant has been found to be as long as seventy-six centimetres with many side branches and rootlets.³⁶ This strength in the root shows an inclination to work strongly into the materiality of life in the physical world: common to many plants but more pronounced in Rock Rose.

With the finding of Rock Rose, Dr Bach's *Twelve Great Remedies* were complete. He spent the last months of the year in Cromer and put the remedies to work. At this stage the first cycle of his discoveries was over. He published the full information about these twelve several times: there is no doubt they appeared to him as a complete and finished set of remedies. That Rock Rose, the last of the twelve, was also moving towards a situational remedy and away from a singular type remedy merely served to illustrate the way things were about to develop.

