

Spring flowers – an underused resource in homeopathy?

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“Over the first green sprigs o’ heather, the muir-fowl faulds his wing,
And there’s nought but joy in my ain land at the comin’ o’ the Spring!”

Alicia Ann, Lady John Scott (1810-1900)

On an unseasonably warm and sunny day (for Scotland!) that just happened to be the Spring Equinox I was sitting in my garden musing as to why I had not used, or indeed seen any of my colleagues using, many of the colourful plants before me. Of course, crocus provides an important remedy in our armamentarium, but what of the rest? So, here are a few pointers to where details of five common Spring flowers can be found. The information is based on entries in some of the most widely used *Materia Medica* and *National Pharmacopoeias* and is certainly not claimed to be exhaustive.

Crocus

Crocus sativus, commonly known as saffron crocus, is best known for being the source of the costly spice that is obtained from the filaments that grow inside the flower. The remedy is used widely in homeopathy and standards for the preparation of the remedy are found in the *German Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia*, the *Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States* and the *Indian Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia*. Its uses are well documented in no less than 143 *Materia Medicas*, including those by Allan, Boger, Boericke, Nash and Phatak. Vermeulen and Johnston describe the plant and its uses in detail in their book *Plants* (2:230).

Hyacinth

Of the two species known as the Common or Garden Hyacinth and the Wild Hyacinth (or Bluebell) it is the latter that has the more interest to homeopaths.

Hyacinthus orientalis (Common Hyacinth) is widely cultivated everywhere in the temperate world for its strongly fragrant flowers which appear exceptionally early in the season, and frequently forced to flower at Christmas time indoors and Spring in the garden. It is used in Herbal

medicine and aromatherapy but does not appear in any of the main *Materia Medica* or *National Pharmacopoeias*.

Agraphis nutans (Wild Hyacinth or English Bluebell) is a perennial plant found in Atlantic areas from north-western Spain to the UK and Ireland. The remedy appears in the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States* and in the *French Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia*. There are brief entries in *Materia Medicas* by Boericke, Clarke, Murphy, and Phatak. Further information in *Plants* (2:923). Keynotes include catarrh, deafness, and diarrhoea.

Narcissus

There are two closely related Springtime flowering species, commonly known as the Daffodil and the Narcissus. They are native to Europe and other temperate areas.

Narcissus pseudonarcissus (Daffodil) has a long history of being used medicinally. Traditional Japanese medicine uses the root to treat wounds. Daffodil bulbs contain an alkaloid the action of which varies as to whether the alkaloid is extracted from the flowering bulb or from the bulb after flowering. It is thus important that the appropriate parts of the plant are used for production of a homeopathic remedy. There is a monograph in the *Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States* but surprisingly, for such an iconic Spring flower, not in other major *Pharmacopoeias*. The remedy appears in 24 *Materia Medica* and similar volumes. JH Clarke, Boericke both state in their *Materia Medicas* that Daffodil is a remedy for cough and bronchitis. Continuous cough, Coryza; frontal headache. The remedy can also be found in Allan and Murphy. The plant and two cases are described by Vermeulen and Johnston (1:161).

Narcissus poeticus (Narcissus) Clarke

reports that ‘a salad of onions in which were mixed some bulbs of *Narcissus poeticus* caused tormina, burning, copious stools with dreadful griping, obtuse senses, fainting, cold hands, cold sweat.’ The plant appears to have little homeopathic use. It is included in Allen, Bradford’s *Index of Homeopathic Proving*s and Vermeulen’s *Source and Substance*.

Snowdrop

Galanthus nivalis, (Snowdrop) is native to a large area of Europe from the UK and Ireland in the west to Turkey in the east, growing best in woodland in acid or alkaline soil. Boericke reports a proving by a Dr A Whiting of Vancouver that includes sore dry throat with dull headache cardiac symptoms. The remedy has a monograph in the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States*. Boericke and Murphy have entries for the remedy as does Vermeulen and Johnston’s *Plants* (1:145).

Tulip

Tulipa gesneriana (Tulip) and *Tulipa sylvestris* (Wild Tulip), are species of plants in the lily family. They have become naturalised in parts of central and southern Europe and in scattered locations in North America. *T. gesneriana* is in Yakir’s *Botanical Repertory* and in Norland’s *Mappa Mundi*, while *T. sylvestris* is in the *German Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia* and in *Plants* (3:309).

This very brief look at some of the most popular spring flowers shows that we do not really make much use of them in homeopathy. It would be good to get some provings carried out! If there are any colleagues who would like to become involved in carrying out provings of Spring or Summer flowers, please do let us know.

Vermeulen F, Johnston L. *Plants – Homeopathic and Medicinal Uses from a Botanical Family Perspective* (4 volume set). Glasgow: Saltire Books, 2011.