

Common Name: **Wallflower**

Genus: *Cheiranthus*

Species: *cheiri*

Family: Brassicaceae

AKA: Gillyflower, Wallstock-Gillofer, Giroflier, Handflower, Stock, Winter-Gilflofloures, Keiri, Beeflower, Baton d'Or



## Historical Uses:

**Medical:** “There is a difference of it in ye flower, for it is found either white, or yellowish, or azure, or else it is of a purple. But of these, ye fittest for medical use is the yellowish, of which ye dried flowers are good by Insession for ye inflammations about ye matrix, & ye expelling ye menstrea. But being taken in Cerat they cure the chaps which are in ye seat, & with honey the Aphthas, but ye seed of it being drank with wine, ye quantity of 2 dragms, or applied as a Pessum with honey doth draw out ye menstrea, & ye seconines, & ye embryo, but the roots being smeared on with acetum do repress ye spleen & help ye goutie.” (1)

“The herbe boiled with white wine, honie, and a little allom, doth cure hot ulcers, and cankers of the mouth. The leaves stamped with a little bay salt, and bound about the wrists of the hands, taketh away the shaking fits of the Ague. A decotion of the floures together with the leaves, is used with good success to mollifie Schirrous tumors. The oil made with these is good to be used to anoint a Paralyticke, as also a goutie part to mitigate paine. Also strong decotion of the floures drunk, moveth the Courses, and expelleth the dead childe.”(2)

“Drunk noon and night for three or four weeks doth cause women to be fruitful.” “It is good also for hard labor in childbirth, paralysis, dropsy.” (3)

“For pain and inflammation of the womb, pound the same plant and put it under the woman; it will help. It also brings on menstruation. For various disorders of the rectum, called *ragadas*, that is primarily for a discharge of blood, take the pounded leaves of this same plant and make them into a poultice. It heals all of the disorders. The leaves of the same plant pounded and mixed with honey heal canker sores of the teeth, from which the



teeth often fall out. To stimulate menstruation, take 10 pennies worth of the seeds of this plant, either pounded and drunken wine or mixed with honey and put on the sexual organ. It brings about menstruation and takes the fetus from the womb. For pain of the spleen, take the roots of this same plant pounded in vinegar. Lay it on the spleen and it will be of benefit.” (4)

“Juice of the flowers put in the eyes takes away the wicked specks therein.” (5)

**Ornamental:** “It is common on old walls, and in some places on rocks; and has thence, for its beauty and fragrance, been introduced into gardens” (6)

**Household:** “The oil has a pleasing perfume if diluted, but in full strength a disagreeable odor. The alkaloid is useful acting on nerve centers and on the muscles.” (7)



Wallflower in bloom

**Folklore/Astrology:**

“The plant belongs to the Moon. To dream of it insures that one’s love is true and that recovery from an illness will be made, whereas to envision plucking it for a bouquet means that a girl has not yet received her best proposal. Because of its fragrance, it was carried in spring festivals by the Greeks, whose name for it, Cheiranthos, means handflower. It stands for faithfulness in adversity in the language of the flowers.” (8)

Other: Mentioned in **Theophrastus** *Enquiry into Plants*, Book 6, Chapter 8, 1-2

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**Contemporary Uses:**

**Parts Used:** Whole plant, leaves, flowers

**Medicinal:** “It has laxative, diuretic, and expectorant effects, and benefits the digestion. Internally for bronchitis, pharyngitis, coughs, laryngitis, and bronchial mucus.” (9)

“Although wallflower was formally used as a diuretic, there was no understanding of its powerful effect on the heart. In small doses it is cardio tonic, supporting a failing heart in a manner similar to foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). In more than small doses it is toxic, and is therefore rarely used.” (10)

**Culinary:** “Young leaves can be added to salads, soups, sauces, and omelets.” (11)

**Ornamental:** “Uses in ornamental gardening” (12)

**Cautions:** “Excess may affect the heart.” (13) “Do not take during pregnancy.” (14)

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**Area of Origin:** Europe

**Physical description:** Stiffly upright, bristly annual, sometimes overwintering with a basal rosette of pinnate leaves

**Plant type:** Herbaceous annual

**Form:** Forb-like

**Height:** 12-36”

**Flower color:** Pale yellow

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Moist to dry

**Ph:** Acid to alkaline

**Hardiness zone:** USDA

**Sun requirements:** Full sun to part shade

**Propagation:** By seed sown in autumn or spring

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### **Sources**

1. Discorides, p. 369
2. Gerard, p. 457-458
3. Freeman, p. 31
4. Van Arsdall, p. 221
5. Freeman, p. 31
6. Culpepper, p. 193
7. Grieve, p. 842
8. Anderson, p. 74
9. Bown, p. 370
10. Chevallier, p. 187
11. Bown, p. 37
12. Anderson, p. 74
13. Bown, p. 370
14. Chevallier, p. 187

### **Illustrations/Images:**

1. Gerards Herbal 1597
2. [http://search.shelmerdine.com/11050002/Plant/4596/Citrona\\_Yellow\\_Wallflower](http://search.shelmerdine.com/11050002/Plant/4596/Citrona_Yellow_Wallflower)