

Cowslip

Primula Veris



Cowslips are one of Ireland's best-known and loved native wild flowers.

Numbers were declining between 1950s and 1980s due to the intensification of agriculture, but they are making a big comeback. They bloom in April and May and you can now see them in parks, pastures and roadsides around you.

Its leaves are covered on both sides with a fine layer of downy hairs and form rosettes, which tend to lie close to the ground. The stalk rises from the centre of this rosette and is topped with a cluster of 1-30 yellow flowers. The flowers are funnel-shaped and have characteristic orange spots at the base of the lobes. In the past they were used to make cowslip wine and were also thought to be 'good for the nerves and brain'.

In Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest', Ariel sings:

*"Where the bee sucks, there suck I.
In a cowslip's bell I lie.
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.*

*Where the bee drinks, I drink dew.
I lie in the cup of a cowslip flower.
I sleep there when the owls hoot.
I fly on a bat's back,
following the summer around the globe.
Happily, happily I will live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."*