



Plant of the Month

Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium Verum*)

Are you sleeping comfortably? Think back to a time, before memory foam and sprung mattresses were even dreamed of, when you would have slept on a palliasse (a straw filled mattress). Dried Lady's Bedstraw was a popular filling not only for its scent but also because it deterred fleas and vermin.

This is a finely hairy erect or trailing plant with creeping underground stems which grows on limestone soils and is found on dry grassland, hedge banks, beaches and in churchyards.



The abundant yellow flowers are very noticeable and the numerous fine leaves form whorls at intervals along the stems which may be up to 18 inches long. In the past, it has had other uses. For example, in cheese making as a substitute for rennet to curdle or coagulate the milk and also to give the traditional colour to Double Gloucester cheese.

Pressed between layers of newspaper for lining wardrobes and drawers, it protected clothes from moths. Some very attractive dyes for fabrics can be derived from the plant, the flowers or the roots being used to produce a range of colours including reds pinks, oranges and yellows. Some can be used on silk.



The common name is derived from the legend that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth to the baby Jesus lying on a mattress stuffed with Lady's Bedstraw which may explain why it was used as a sedative for women during childbirth.

Do lookout for this interesting plant in the northwest quadrant of our Cemetery.

By Joan Stacey