

Marsh Marigold a misnomer

BY R.B. MacLAREN

Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), sometimes called Cowslip, is familiar to just about everyone who is interested in wild flowers. If ever a plant was misnamed this one is. It doesn't resemble a Marigold in the least and the name Cowslip is properly applied to an English wild flower related to the primrose family. Marsh Marigold belongs to the same family as the buttercup. Marsh Buttercup would be a much more realistic name because of its habitat, and the blossoms resemble large, brilliant-yellow buttercups.

Marsh Marigold is common in P.E.I. and is found mostly in swampy or marshy areas, but it also grows in places where one can walk without rubber footwear. Two examples would be Wheatley River and Millvale. Oddly enough, although Marsh Marigold is common in P.E.I. it is rarely if ever found in mainland Nova Scotia. However, it is no stranger to Cape Breton.

As a pot herb, Marsh Marigold is really good. Although the raw leaves are acrid and may even be poisonous, the poisonous principle is expelled by boiling. To collect leaves for cooking it is not necessary to pull up the plant. With suitable footwear one can collect the leaves easily. The dark green leaves with the underlying yellow pigment indicate that the plant is likely high in the A and C vitamins. When sufficient leaves have been gathered they should be washed and then boiled in one or more changes of water. The oftener the water is changed, the milder the greens will be. After this cook the greens in very little water until they are tender. You may then treat them as you would spinach. It is not suggested that the greens will taste like spinach but they do taste good and Marsh:

Marigold greens make a very acceptable substitute. The writer has used them to his own satisfaction.

It is said that the small, tight buds of the Marsh Marigold can be boiled in the same way as the leaves and then pickled. They can then be used as capers. The writer doesn't like capers so has never tried the Marigold buds!

In addition to its nutritive qualities, Marsh Marigold is credited with medicinal values. The acrid juice applied to warts is supposed to make them disappear. However, since warts often disappear for no apparent reason, the juice may not be a cure. It will, at least, do no harm. Folk lore suggests that Marsh Marigold was useful in treating epilepsy. There does not appear to be any medical evidence to support this belief.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that Marsh Marigold is easily transplanted if one has a suitable place to grow it. A swamp or stream should be quite satisfactory.