



CALENDULA OFFICINALIS

Fam. Asteraceae

DESCRIPTION

Coarse plant that adapts to different climates and soils, though it prefers temperature ranges from 20 to 30 °C.

HABITAT

Calendula is native to Europe, North Africa and South Asia; it can also be found in coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea, in uncultivated meadows and on roadsides.

DISTRIBUTION

Widely cultivated everywhere; in Italy, it is commonly found in the southern regions and in Liguria; it can also grow spontaneously in Mediterranean regions up to 600 m above sea level.

FLOWERS

Intense yellow, orange or white, the flowers are bundled in flower heads, with green, oval and pointed bracts. The flowering period is from June to November. They are dimorphic: the central flowers are male and tubular, the peripheral ones are female, ligulate and longer than the bracts in the involucre. The flowering period of the calendula is from summer to mid-autumn.

LEAVES

The shape of calendula leaves recalls a slightly pointed spear, the terminal leaves are sessile, alternate, whole or slightly jagged and light-green; the basal leaves are greyish-green, oblong and arranged in a rosette.

FRUITS

Arched, greyish and wrinkled achenes.

STEM

Erect or ascending and covered with down.

INTERESTING FACTS

The flowers are used in herbal medicine to prepare excellent herbal teas. Unlike many other plants belonging to the same family, this plant does not cause allergies or irritation and is not toxic. It can be particularly beneficial for women, as it relieves menstrual pain; it is also widely used in cosmetics for its decongestant and moisturising properties.

ROOTS

The plant has a well developed central taproot that reaches a maximum depth of about 30 cm.

