



Fair Maids of February
 St. Simeon's Flower ("Many Hearts")
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 February, 1996

NEW, FEBRUARY 1996

For us at Mary's Gardens, Candlemas Day, The Feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, February 2nd, marks the beginning of the new gardening year as we look in the northeastern United States for the first buds or blooms of Snowdrops, known also as [Candlemas Bells](#), Purification Flower and Fair Maids of February - one of many flowers given names for the liturgical feasts of the Church for which they are in bloom.

In Europe Candlemas was the pivotal day on which it was discerned by various signs of nature whether there was to be early or late spring weather - a popular tradition which has been continued in the United States as Groundhog's Day.

In our Mary's Gardens thoughts and prayers Candlemas is also the anniversary of the passing of Frances Crane Lillie, of beloved memory, who in 1932 established the first public Mary Garden in the United States beside the Angelus Tower, given by her, at St. Joseph's Church in Woods Hole, on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Blooming, in the liturgical cycle of Mary, on Candlemas (Feb 2) - between the feasts of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple (Nov 21) and the Annunciation (Mar 25) - the "Fair Maids of February", the first blooms of spring, bring into view, as it were, the maidenly spirituality of Mary, the Mystical Rose, in which, preserving the graces of the Immaculate Conception, she grew in fullness of grace in readiness for her fiat, her "yes", in response to the call of the Annunciation.



Candlemas also recalls the Prophecy of Simeon at the time of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple that he was to be "a light unto the gentiles" (hence the holding of lighted candles at Mass by all the faithful, giving rise to the name Candlemas). His further prophecy that Jesus was to be "a sign that was to be contradicted" whereupon Mary's soul was to be "pierced by a sword, that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" is symbolized by the blade-like foliage of Iris, known as "Mary's Sword" (of Sorrow) - and also by the tiny spear-like foliage of Snowdrops.

A Third flower associated with this feast is St. Simeon's Flower, *Malva moschata*, so named because it is a herb the application of which was believed to give light to the blind (and whose red, heart-like flower petals recall for us the "many hearts" whose thoughts are revealed through their response to Mary's sword of sorrow).

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