

Primula elatior (Primrose)

Botanical Bytes by Bruner

By Gregory Bruner

Foliage Height: 8-10"
Foliage Width: 8-10"
Flower Height: 10-12"
Foliage Color: Green
Flower Color: Naturally Yellow
USDA Hardiness: 4-8
Moisture: Average-Moist
Light: Full Sun – Part Sun



Primula elatior is naturally found throughout Europe growing in moist woods and meadows where preferred soils are generally nutrient and calcium rich. Primroses are occasionally confused with Evening Primrose, which is from the genus *Oenothera* and is not even a close cousin to this vibrant beauty.

Generally the native forms of *Primula elatior* are known as Cowslips, while most gardeners refer to the cultivated cousins as Hardy Primrose. The name *Primula* is derived from the Latin word *Primus*, which means “first.” This is a good fit considering how early the flowers bloom.

Hundreds of these colorful cousins are available on the market in a startlingly vivid array of vibrant colors including white, red, blue, yellow, orange, purple, and every shade in between. These flowers burst onto the scene in early to late spring. The dark green foliage is evergreen and adds minor interest in the winter.

Moisture is one of the keys to growing Hardy Primrose. Never let it dry out for extended periods of time. For the perfect garden conditions, choose a partially sunny location in organically rich well-drained moist soil. The preferred pH is actually a little on the acidic side at 5.5-6.5. Gardeners in the northern range for Hardy Primrose can plant it in full sun, but in the south it cannot tolerate full sun and dislikes the high humidity.

Its small stature also makes it an excellent choice for pots. Enjoy the vibrant colors on your deck or patio as long as the flowers last; then place this plant in a nice shady spot in your garden later in the summer.

Primroses have few serious pest or disease problems in the home garden, except that slugs and snails can sometimes be a minor nuisance for this plant as well as many other shade plants.

Some forms of Hardy Primrose were used as far back as the first century to treat many afflictions. It has been known by the names of *Herba paralysis*, *Radix arthritica*, and *Palsywort* because people used it to treat these conditions. From a more practical standpoint today, herbal *primula elatior* teas are used to treat common colds involving a cough.

Primula elatior is a wonderful addition to the front edge of a garden, where its vibrant colors will draw all eyes to its exceptional spring beauty.