

The Daisy



English Name: Common Daisy
Scientific Name: *Bellis perennis*
Irish Name: Nóinín



Images courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Daisies is native to Ireland. It can be seen on nearly every lawn or patch of mown grass. They can also be found in short grass in pastures and on the coast. Everyone is familiar with them and it is likely the tiny flowers can be found blooming almost right through the year, especially in a mild winter. The leaves are spoon-shaped and form a rosette that grows very close to the ground. The flowers are single and grow on slender, upright stalks.

The daisy is a composite flower. The neat little flower-heads are about 10–30 mm across. The yellow centre is actually a dense cluster of disc florets or tiny flowers imitating a single flower. On the outer edge are white ray florets, which again are tiny flowers, each of which have a strap-shaped side-petal. The flowerhead sometimes has a pinkish hue. Like some other flowers, they close at night and in dull weather.

The daisy is a perennial plant. Perennial means that the plant will live for several years. These plants have short, creeping rootstalks known as rhizomes, which often help daisies colonise a lawn. They can be difficult to get rid of and some consider them to be weeds. Others love the flash of white against the green grass!

FACT FILE:

Habitat: Short grassland, sand-dunes and lawns.
Colour: White and yellow.
Height: 5–20 cm.

Relatives

The daisy belongs to a huge family of about 21,000 species, known as the Asteraceae family. This is one of the largest groups of Irish wild flowers.

One relative that has a very similar name and similar appearance is the Ox-eye Daisy. The Ox-eye daisy is much taller, from 20-100 cm, and its flowerhead is much larger.

Other relatives include dandelions, sunflowers, asters, chamomile and yarrow. There are even vegetables in this family, such as Jerusalem artichoke, chicory and lettuce.



Ox-eye Daisies