



## Heather



**Latin:** *Calluna vulgaris*  
**Irish:** *Fraoch mór*

Also known as Common Heather or Ling Heather, this is one of the most common plants on the mountains and bogs of Ireland.

It is a bushy, evergreen shrub, meaning it has leaves all year round. Purple blossoms appear from July to October.

**Flowers:** Tiny bell-shaped flowers, roughly 5mm long, grow all over the bush. The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

**Seeds:** The fruits of the heather look like capsules and contain the seeds.

**Leaves:** Dark green, scale-like leaves grow in pairs along the stems. These leaves are covered in a waxy coat to help conserve water during the summer months.

**Roots:** The roots of Ling Heather are surrounded by a mesh of threads called mycorrhiza. These threads grow into the roots and help them to absorb minerals and water from the peat in exchange for sugars produced in the leaves of the heather.

**Uses:** Heather is an important source of food in the winter for sheep and deer when the plants on the ground are covered by frost and snow. Red Grouse feed on the young shoots and seeds of the plant.

**Other:** The woody stems of the heather can easily catch fire but new shoots will usually grow from the base. In this way, the plant will survive.

Heather is the national flower of Norway.

The Latin name *Calluna* comes from the Greek word 'kalluno', meaning 'to sweep'. Long ago, bundles of ling heather were tied together to make brooms and brushes for cleaning.