

SANGUINARIA CANADENSIS F. MULTIPLEX 'PLENA'

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Sanguinaria canadensis f. multiplex 'Plena'. Well, that's a mouthful. How many of us will remember the full botanical name? At least we may remember the canadensis element, anticipating the plant's Canadian origin and consequently its full hardiness. Perhaps better to think of it, then, by its common name: bloodroot, the name given by the gardener from whom I bought my plant on a summer gardens open day in Wingerworth [Derbyshire].



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The pure white flowers of *S. can. f. multiplex 'Plena'*

Unsurprisingly, the name is derived from the intense red colour of the plant's roots, which are, in fact, slowly spreading rhizomes. The plant appealed to me because of its rather glaucous, lobed leaves, which grow into a nice little clump, and I was told that it had white flowers in spring. The gardener said that it was not common, and added cryptically that the pot I had bought may contain a second small, white-flowered plant.

The bloodroot duly flowered next spring, and what a wonderful surprise it was. The short flower stems appeared before the leaves (which grew to about 8" - 12" tall in my garden), and the white, double flowers which appeared in March/April were exquisite. I was immediately hooked on the plant, despite its short flowering period. This year, a speaker at my village gardening association had a couple of these plants for sale. I commented on the rarity of the plant and its gorgeous white flowers and he agreed on both points, remarking on the purity of the flowers' snowy colour.

Browsing the RHS website recently, I discovered that bloodroot should be planted with a south, east or west facing aspect. I have planted mine with a north facing aspect. So much for my gardening acumen!

As the relatively large, double flowers of my plant disappeared and the leaves started to emerge, they were replaced by dainty white, double, smaller flowers of slightly different form. I took this to be another bonus of the bloodroot until this year, when I saw these dainty flowers in a nursery, bearing the name *Anemone nemorosa* 'Flore Pleno', the double form of our native wood anemone. Ah, this struck a chord: the mysterious second white-flowering plant mentioned by the Wingerworth gardener. Subsequently inspecting my own plant at home, I found the much smaller leaves of the *Anemone nemorosa* 'hiding' beneath the leaves of the bloodroot. I had bought two gems for the price of one. If you get the chance to buy either of these plants, don't miss it: they make excellent additions to any garden.