

## RECIPES & HIKING TIP: SPRING IN THE PUCHER AU

### Spring Awakening in Salzburgerland

by Silja / 24. März 2022 / Culinary World / Nature



## 8 heralds of spring in the Pucher floodplain forest

Certified herbalist and spice expert Silja Parke from [Wildemöhre.at](https://www.wildemoehre.at) was out and about in the Pucher Au and wrote an article about the spring awakening in Salzburg for [PUCH MAGAZIN](#). In addition to the interesting information about the Auwald and the delicious recipes, such as the crispy Bärlauchstangerl (bear's garlic stalk), you will find eight spring messengers with all their characteristics and special features. There are also folk wisdom and tips on the healing powers of the plants.

You can find the whole article here: [www.puch-salzburg.com/en/magazine/spring-pucher-au-recipes.htm](https://www.puch-salzburg.com/en/magazine/spring-pucher-au-recipes.htm)

## What is blooming in the Pucher Auwald?

1. Snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) and spring marigold (*Lecojum vernum* - partly protected (!) in the province of Salzburg - "the elf flowers").



Left snowdrops, right spring knotweeds

We start with the two poisonous amaryllis plants, the snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) and the spring marigold (*Lecojum vernum*), which are also affectionately called "Märzenbecher". With their delicate, bell-shaped calyxes, they appear delicate and elfin. Both species are partially protected in the province of Salzburg, which means that they may not be dug up and you may only pick a hand bunch of them. If you want to pick, you should only do so in places where the species occur in large areas. You might want to think twice, though, because the little flowers don't last very long in the vase. An old legend even claims that snowdrops are messengers of death and that you should not bring them into the house, perhaps this wisdom is due to their toxicity.

If you are not superstitious, you can buy snowdrops from a nursery and arrange them in a pot with branches. This way you can enjoy the pretty decoration for longer and even plant the snowdrops in the garden after they have finished flowering, where they will delight people and animals anew every year. Another folk saying is that if you find a snowdrop in nature, you should stroke your closed eyes with the plant and you won't get sick for the rest of the year.

**Snowdrops and spring knapweed are often confused with each other. Unlike the snowdrop, the white petals and sepals of the spring knotweed are the same length and, unlike the snowdrop, each has a yellow to greenish spot.**



## 2. Liverwort (*Hepatica nobilis*) - "the velvet soft"



The purple liverworts (*Hepatica nobilis*) also cause a stir in the springtime floodplain forest when their brightly coloured flower heads shine out from a distance in March. It is called liverwort because of its three-lobed leaf shape, which is reminiscent of the shape of the human liver. The leaves are leathery, glossy, dark green on top and coloured a deep and beautiful shade of purple on the underside. The young leaves appear after flowering and are quite velvety soft-haired at the beginning. The leaves, which are partly visible during flowering, are old and from the previous year. The flower stems also have fluffy soft hairs. You would like to stroke them all the time 😊 .

In folk medicine, the dried liverwort was used to treat gallbladder, liver and lung complaints. Today this is no longer common, because as a buttercup, the liverwort contains toxic irritants (protoanemonin). Although this loses its toxicity when dried, I personally do not use it because there are good alternatives. For liver and gall bladder, for example, there are numerous bitter herbs, including dandelion and yarrow, and for lung congestion, for example, cowslip. In pharmacies, liverwort is sometimes available as a tea herb, but also as a spagyric. The pollen supply of the liverwort is used by insects such as bees, bumblebees, hoverflies and beetles.

### 3. Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) - "Once an arrow poison".



Like liverworts, wood anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*) belong to the buttercup family. The wood anemone is slightly poisonous, but a larger quantity would still be fatal. It has the highest toxicity during the flowering period. The protoanemonin it contains is weakened by drying and boiling, but the plant should still not be used (!). In former times, the pressed juice of the herb was used as arrow poison. The plant was also used in folk medicine, for example externally for rheumatism, joint inflammation and bronchitis. Basically, many poisonous

Wood anemones offer insects both nectar, but rather little, and pollen. They are popular with (wild) bees and bumblebees (bumblebees are also wild bees). If necessary, anemones can pollinate themselves. This often happens when a flower closes. The flowers of the wood anemone close at night and in cool weather. This happens because the outside of the petals grows faster than the inside in cool temperatures. So there is an "emergency programme" built in in case there are not enough "external pollinators" in early spring. However, self-pollination has the disadvantage that genetic diversity suffers. Inbreeding processes can result in fewer healthy offspring, and in the long run, resistance suffers.

And another nice "wood anemone detail" are the aggregate nut fruits. Here, individual nutlets are combined to form a fruit cluster. The nutlets contain fat-rich oil bodies, so-called "elaiosomes". These are loved by ants and carried away. In this way, the wood anemone can spread and expand its habitat by means of these little helpers. Isn't that clever? Food in exchange for reproductive help!

By the way, you can also find yellow anemones (*Anemone ranunculoides*) in the meadows from time to time.



#### 4. All the little stars ...



Forest Yellow (*Gagea lutea*)



Two-leaved Blue (*Scilla bifolia*)

The slightly poisonous yellow and blue starflower are also inhabitants of the meadows and provide colourful accents in spring. The delicate flowers look like little stars and attract (wild) bees, (hover)flies, beetles and moths.

#### 5. Daphne (*Daphne mezereum*) - completely protected (!) in the province of Salzburg - "the beguiling one"



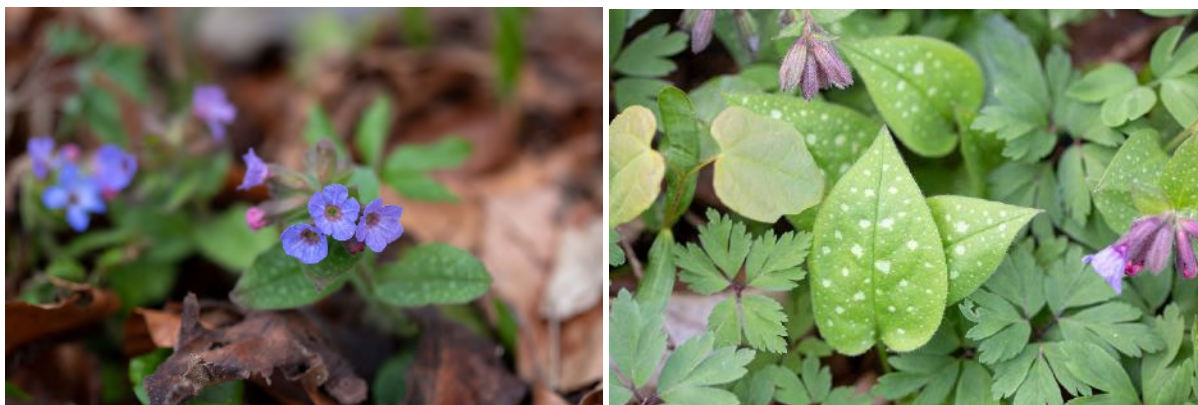
A real eye-catcher once you have found it is the daphne from the daphne family (Thymeleaceae). All parts of the plant are highly poisonous. Poisoning is manifested by vomiting, cramps, bleeding and burning in the throat and neck, which has also given the daphne the name "cellar neck" (Greek "mezereon").

The pink flowers are beautiful and exude a beguiling fragrance, a little like jasmine - it is definitely worth taking a sniff! A special feature of the daphne is that its flowers bloom directly on the stem (cauliflor). This stem flowering is otherwise only common in tropical plants, isn't that exciting? The flowers are pollinated by long-tailed insects (bees, bumblebees, butterflies), but they can also pollinate themselves. They offer insects plenty of nectar and are especially valuable for butterflies flying early in spring.

In the past, daphne was even used in folk medicine despite its toxicity; for example, bark preserved in vinegar was used to draw pus out of wounds, boils and ulcers. Today, daphne is used at best in homeopathy, especially for skin diseases, but also for pain and stomach complaints.

The genus got its name from the Greek nymph "Daphne", who was turned into a laurel tree by her father, the river god "Peneios", when Apollo, the son of Zeus, would not let go of his unrequited love for her. Within the genus "daphne" there is also the laurel daphne (*Daphne laureola*), which is found in Western and Southern Europe, so the name can be explained. In common parlance, laurel daphne is also called "evergreen laurel" or "forest laurel", but it is just as highly poisonous.

## 6. True lungwort, spotted lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) - "Hänsel und Gretl" (Hansel and Gretl)“



It belongs to the so-called "hemicryptophytes", which are plants whose survival buds do not lie underground but on the surface of the earth. To protect them from the weather, they are covered by leaves, snow or soil during the cold season. They can usually only be discovered if you look closely or push the leaves or snow aside a little. The lungwort got its name from its white-spotted leaves. The white spots were reminiscent of areas of the lungs, and since in earlier times its healing properties were inferred from the nature of the plant (signature), it was used in the Middle Ages as a lung remedy, and Hildegard von Bingen, for example, also passed it down as a lung remedy.

It is also called "Hänsel and Gretl" or "little brother and sister" because of the blue and pink flowers that can often be observed next to each other on the same plant. In the course of the flowering period, the PH value changes in the flower, which leads to the different colouring. While at the beginning of the flowering period the pH value is still acidic and the flowers are red, towards the end of the flowering period it becomes alkaline and the flowers turn violet-blue. The flowers are pollinated mainly by long-tailed wild bees but also by early-flying butterflies. They prefer the young, pink flowers as they contain even more nectar.

In addition to lung diseases, lungwort has also been used for respiratory diseases as a calming and expectorant. Folk medicine also knows it as a wound-healing agent and uses either the powder as a wound powder or the infusion as a wash or wound dressing. However, when using this herb internally, it should be noted that it may contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are harmful to the liver and classified as carcinogenic and potentially mutagenic. Use should therefore be restricted in terms of quantity and time. Herbal teas and preparations are available in pharmacies. Flowers are available in small quantities as an edible flower decoration.

### 7. Cowslip (*Primula elatior*) - the "opener of the sky"



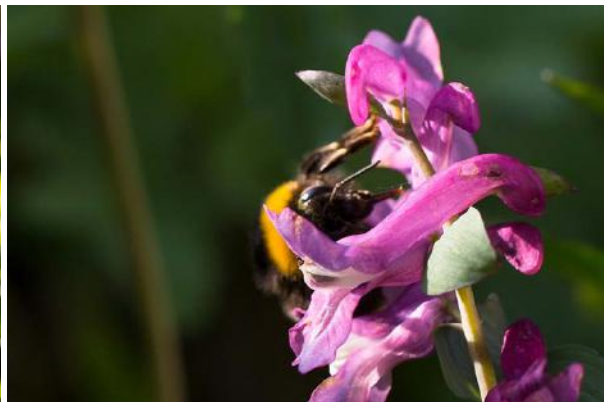
The cowslip from the primrose family is also known as the wood cowslip. "Cowslip" it is called because it blossoms with the first warming rays of sunshine and is said to unlock the heavens for spring.

The flowers in particular are a gentle cough and calming agent for the nerves. The leaves are also used against coughs, but they contain much more saponins than the flowers, which is why the flowers are used for children. The leaves should not be overdosed. The flowers are a beautiful edible flower decoration and are also suitable for a syrup.

For insects, the primrose offers sweet nectar, but only for long-tailed species, which include some bumblebees and of course butterflies. The cowslip is not protected in Salzburg, but the situation is different in Germany, for example.

### 8. Hohlen Lerchensporns (*Corydalis cava*) – „the bumblebee magnet“

Do you know why the flowers of the *Corydalis cava* are often perforated?







There is a nice "bumblebee story" to tell about the crested larkspur from the fumitory family. The plant gets its name from its flower shape, which is reminiscent of the spurred toes of the crested lark. Because of the "deeply spurred" flowers, only long-snouted insects can reach the nectar, and this is exactly the crux of the matter! Of course, it is mainly long-tailed bumblebees that take advantage of the offer, but the short-tailed species also want a piece of the cake and become "nectar robbers" by simply biting open the side of the spur to get at the nectar. Sometimes you can see the bumblebees doing this and even if you take a close look at the flowers, you can often spot the small holes bitten into them by the bumblebees. However, the plant is only deprived of its nectar and does not benefit in any way. The side bite does not result in any pollination. Only long-tailed insects can pollinate the larkspur.

The hollow larkspur is poisonous in all parts, mainly in the root bulb. The poison mainly affects the central nervous system and the musculoskeletal system. Extracts from the root bulb are, however, an ingredient in sedatives. However, one should not try this at home, as an overdose can be dangerous.

*You can find the whole PUCH MAGAZINE article with more information about the Pucher Au including recipe tips here: [www.puch-salzburg.com/en/magazine/spring-pucher-au-recipes.htm](http://www.puch-salzburg.com/en/magazine/spring-pucher-au-recipes.htm)*

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