

*Erysimum cheiri* ‘Harpur Crewe’

‘Harpur Crewe’ is one of the oldest known cultivars, though its origins are obscure. It was grown by the Rev. Henry Harpur Crewe (1830-83), who was rector of Drayton Beauchamp, near Tring, Hertfordshire. He was an enthusiastic gardener and it is said that “Mr Harpur Crewe’s many friends who received this plant from him without name, referred to it as ‘Harpur Crewe’s Wallflower’”.

In 1896 it received the Award of Merit from the R.H.S. (Floral Committee – “votes unanimous”!) and was put into commercial cultivation by Messrs. Paul, who amended its name to *Cheiranthus* ‘Harpur Crewe’. It continued in cultivation during the twentieth century and received the Award of Garden Merit from the R.H.S in 1961. Since then, ‘Harpur Crewe’ has continued being grown commercially and it is still a popular cultivar today.

It is difficult to be sure what accounts for the long term popularity of this cultivar. It does not have any single, outstanding feature which would be sure to guarantee its continued cultivation. Rather, it is something about the harmonious ‘rightness’ of the whole.



It is an evergreen perennial with an upright, sub-shrubby habit, usually growing to 30 or 40 cm. The leaves are lanceolate and are not serrated. As with many *Erysimum*s, the foliage colour varies according to growing conditions. In hot and dry conditions in poor soil, the plant will put on relatively little growth and the leaves will be small and a greyish green. If grown in more moist and fertile conditions with some shade, the plant will put on much more growth each season and the foliage will be a bright, almost yellowy green.

The flowers are small compared to many other cultivars, but they are a rich, golden yellow and they are scented. ‘Harpur Crewe’ is also one of only two cultivars to have double flowers (along with ‘Bloody Warrior’). The flowers are held aloft on short racemes and, like many *Erysimum*s, ‘Harpur Crewe’ has a long flowering period.

Commenting on its Award of Garden Merit, the R.H.S Journal noted, in summary, that “It is a pleasing plant, and if somewhat demure with its neat tidy appearance, none the less very desirable and worthy of the Award of Garden Merit” .