

Our Flower, the Marguerite

This very participative program shares tidbits about the marguerite. For more marguerite details, see the “History of the Marguerite” program. Print and cut out the cards (rectangle boxes) ahead of time.

Research for this program came through gardening books, the internet, the Encarta encyclopedia, 100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names by Diana Wells and Dictionary of Plant Names by Allen J. Coombes.

I’d never heard of the marguerite before I became a P.E.O., but thought I knew a daisy when I saw one. “Isn’t the marguerite just a daisy?”

Let’s learn about the marguerite in a quick, easy and participative way. I have six cards with questions and answers. Who would like to read some questions? *Hand out the six question cards.*

Don’t share your cards yet. We’ll go in order and anyone can answer. This is not a competitive event, just participative.

The areas researched were:

1. What really is a Marguerite?
2. Where did the Marguerite come from and how did it get this name?
3. How did the Marguerite become the P.E.O. flower?

We’ll uncover these through the questions ...

Question One:

What kind of flower is the Marguerite?

- A. Daisy
- B. Chrysanthemum
- C. Argyranthemum frutescens (ar-jy-RAN-thee-mum froo-TE-enz)
- D. All of the above

Answer: D – all of the above. Argyranthemum frutescens is the scientific genus and species of the Marguerite. It is a variety of the Chrysanthemum and is commonly called a “Paris daisy.”

So the marguerite is a daisy. But there are many daisies that are not marguerites. English daisies, African daisies and Shasta daisies are not marguerites.

The marguerite is of the genus *Chrysanthemum* or *Argyranthemum*. *Argyranthemum* comes from the Greek words *argyros* (meaning silver) and *anthemos* (meaning flower). The species is *frutescens*, named possibly for its shrubby, bushy look.

To complicate things, there are other species called marguerites that are not our yellow and white ones.

Question Two:

The Marguerite is native to ...

- A. Europe
- B. Macronesia
- C. Canary Islands
- D. All of the above

Answer: C – Canary Islands. The *Argyranthemum frutescens* is native to the Canary Islands, which are located off the northwestern coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean.

The genus *Argyranthemum* is native to Macronesia, but the species *frutescens* originated in the Canary Islands.

Canary birds are yellow ... but that is not the connection here! The “cane” in the Canary Islands is from the wild dogs, or canes, that used to roam the islands. These plants were brought to America with the colonists.

Question Three:

The name for the Marguerite came from ...

- A. Margaret of Anjou
- B. The Greek word for “pearl”
- C. The French word for “daisy”
- D. All of the above

Answer: D – all of the above, possibly. The Marguerite may have been named for a “Margaret.” The most likely candidate for this honor is Margaret of Anjou who had daisies embroidered on her personal banners. She was the wife of Henry VI, who in 1422 succeeded to the thrones of both England and France. The name may also have been derived from two saints, Saint Margaret of Antioch and Saint Margaret of Cortona.

Another origin could be the Greek word for “pearl” which is “margaretes.”

The Marguerite is sometimes called the “Paris daisy” and the word for daisy in French is “marguerite.”

Question Four:

What P.E.O. events happened in 1893?

- A. Marguerite was chosen as the flower
- B. Yellow and White were adopted as the colors
- C. The P.E.O. opening ode was adopted
- D. All of the above

Answer: A – the Marguerite was chosen as our flower. “Old gold and white” were adopted as the P.E.O. colors in 1888 and the opening ode was adopted in 1921.

You might have assumed that the colors, flower and opening ode were all selected when the organization was founded, but as you just heard they were added later.

Question Five:

Why was the Marguerite chosen as the P.E.O. flower?

- A. Its colors
- B. It was easy to obtain
- C. It was the only flower proposed
- D. All of the above
- E. A and B

Answer: E – A and B. Several flowers were considered before the Marguerite was chosen. The Marguerite was suggested by Mrs. Siddie Richards, Chapter Z, Waterloo, Iowa, because its “colors are just right and then it is a flower almost always obtainable.”

Did you know that at Cottey College, the freshmen make a daisy chain for the graduates? By coincidence!

Question Six:

Which of the following was not considered as a possible official flower for P.E.O.?

- A. Marigold
- B. Rose
- C. Chrysanthemum
- D. Calla lily
- E. Cosmos

Answer: A – marigold. According to the minutes of the October 1893 convention, the following flowers were proposed: “the marguerite, yellow and white roses, cosmos, calla lily, yellow and white chrysanthemums and daisy.”

The minutes also stated: “As the marguerite and the daisy are essentially the same, whoever has one of them may not fear but that she has the floral emblem, and all pictures or drawings of one or the other, will answer the purpose.”

In closing, I’d like to share a quote by Diana Wells about the daisy, our marguerite ...

“In a vase, they will make other flowers wilt. But a field of them looks like a sky studded with millions of stars – stars whose beauty for once is not inaccessible and that we can reach for and hold in our hands.”