

## FAQs for Plantlife's Wildflowers Count

### Is the Wildflowers Count complicated?

No it isn't! All the information that you need is in the Wildflowers Count Guide which you will receive when you register in your free survey pack.

Also in the free survey pack there is a full colour guide to the 99 wildflowers you are asked to count, safety notes and a map showing your 1km survey square

Help is always available at [wfs@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:wfs@plantlife.org.uk), or on our helpline telephone: 01722 342755

### Do I have to know a lot about wildflowers?

No, the plants we have chosen are some of the more simple to identify, and the Wildflowers Count Identification Guide is very good, using flower colour to help you find the right plant. Your confidence will build as you go on with the survey and gain more experience. Take someone with you as two heads are better than one. If you are keen you could go on a course to learn more [www.wildaboutplants.org.uk/events](http://www.wildaboutplants.org.uk/events) has a diary of events run by Plantlife, or you could try the Field Studies Council, the Wildflower Society or the BSBI. There are many books such as the field guides suggested in the Wildflowers Count Instructions that are very useful as well.

### What if I find a wildflower that I cannot identify with any certainty?

Take a photograph of it with your digital camera or mobile phone and email it to us at [wfs@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:wfs@plantlife.org.uk)

### What if my 1km square isn't suitable?

Squares are chosen at random based on your postcode and will always be within 5km of your home. If there is a problem your square please contact us at [wfs@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:wfs@plantlife.org.uk), or on our helpline telephone: 01722 342755 and we will do our best to help, allocating a new square if necessary.

### Why do I have to go to a random 1km square? Can't I survey somewhere of my choosing?

Scientific experiments often involve taking samples at random and the Wildflowers Count is no different. We want to get a picture of what is happening to our common plants at a national level, but we do not have enough people to cover every 1km square, so we take a random sample. If we allowed people to send in data from places where they knew plants were growing, we would get biased results and probably too rosy a picture of the state of our common plants and the habitats where they grow.

### How do I work out my 1km walk?

It is best to plot a route on your map before you set out, try using the website 'Where's the path' which is best found by putting that into a search engine. The site shows your Ordnance Survey map next to a Google Earth image of the same area and allows you to plot routes, it even works out the distance for you. There are helpful tips in the Wildflowers Count Guide too. It is best to do the walk first without recording anything, and do your recording on the way back.

### I find it difficult to locate my plots in a featureless landscape.

We appreciate that it is tricky to find your plots in large fields with no obvious landmarks. Problems can also arise in thick woodlands where it is difficult to accurately assess where you are. Making a simple sketch map is a great help, and you could take photographs. Please do your best to get to where you think the centre of your square is, as this is a key part of the survey. In future years it is important that you survey the same area again. If the landowner is

in agreement, you could mark your plot using a stake or similar. Perhaps you could pace out a distance from a fixed object. Use your ordnance survey map that came with your pack to mark your survey areas.

**The centre is in a field of crops / ploughed field, should I still survey there?**

Don't walk through crops, but try to find an area within 50m of the centre. Probably this will be at the edge of the field and means that part of your 5m x 5m plot is adjacent to a linear feature, but that cannot be helped. Try and record what you can see from the edge of your square.

Previous surveyors please continue to survey your existing plots.

**My square is in an urban area, do I still need to survey it?**

Yes, please. The best method to choose is the Wildflowers Path. There may be very few wildflowers to record, or maybe none, but that is important information for us. It may seem odd to be looking for wildflowers in towns and cities but there are always areas where seeds can establish themselves, grass verges for example.

**The centre is in a golf course, what do I do?**

Please don't survey if there is any risk to your safety (eg when the course is open). Seek advice from the owners of the course as it may be possible to do a Wildflowers Path, but if it is not safe we will allocate you a new square.

**What happens if I don't find any of the wildflowers in the guide?**

Please fill in the form and send it to us, it is just as important to know where plants are not growing as it is to know where they are growing. What is most important is that you have thoroughly searched the plots so that we can be sure any changes detected are real. If you would like to do a count in another 1km square in addition to your original one simply email [wfs@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:wfs@plantlife.org.uk) or telephone on 01722 342755 and leave a message.

**How often do I need to do the survey?**

You only need to survey once, but you can survey more than once, just fill in a separate form for each visit, and make sure that you cover the same ground, so you need to know the route of your wildflower path, and/or the position of your plots.

It is worth remembering that if you have woodland in your survey it is best to do it in spring, more open habitats can be visited later.

**Can I record all the wildflowers or just the 99 in the guide?**

If you want to record more than the wildflowers in the guide then you will be one of our Super-surveyors. There is a super-surveyor box on the front of the survey form to tick to tell us which groups of plants you are recording.

**I'm finding it difficult to work out the % for habitat types.**

Please do not worry about this too much as the % cover categories are quite broad. We are just looking for an overall picture.

**I have done the Common Plants Survey and would like to continue to survey my habitat plots.**

Yes, please continue to survey the habitat plots as the information will be very useful. There is a copy of the Common Plants Survey form on the website for you to download, or we can send you a copy if you contact us at [wfs@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:wfs@plantlife.org.uk) or telephone 01722 342755 and leave a message.

**Do I need permission to go onto farms?**

Unless you are walking on marked footpaths or bridleways then it is essential to ask permission, try to find the name of the farm and ring them up. In our experience most landowners are interested in the survey and are very happy for their land to be surveyed.

The website has a letter to the landowner for you to download if you need it.

If you are having difficulties, please contact Plantlife.

**I am worried about surveying on my own?**

We recommend that you take someone with you, for company and for your own safety. It can be very helpful to have someone to fill in the form while you do the identification, and two heads are always better than one!

**Do I have to return to the same area each year or can I go to new places?**

We ask you to use the same 1km square each year, and take the same Wildflower Path and the same plots within your square because this is how we can build up a picture of any changes taking place. We need to know if the wildflower species in your survey are declining, increasing or staying the same and only time will tell us that.

It is this repeated surveying of the same areas every year that makes this a unique and very valuable survey.

Plantlife International is the UK's leading charity dedicated to the conservation of wild plants in their natural habitats. Plantlife acts directly to stop common wild plants becoming rare in the wild, to rescue wild plants on the brink of extinction, and to protect sites of exceptional botanical importance. The charity carries out practical conservation work, influences relevant policy and legislation, and collaborates widely to promote the cause of wild plant conservation. For more information visit our website: [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk) or call 01722 342 730.