



Plantlife



Identification Guide

A guide to wild plants, fungi, lichens and trees

Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*



Welcome to this all-in-one guide to the fascinating world of plants and fungi.

Whether you're a budding botanist or just starting out, this guide has something for you – written and produced by our Plantlife experts.

Including plants, fungi, trees and lichens, the 128 species have been chosen because they are easy to spot and relatively common. From Common Spotted Orchid to Wild Cherry, and Scarlet Waxcap to Yellow Wall Lichen, we've got you covered.

Who are we?

Plantlife is working to secure a world rich in the wild plants and fungi that are essential to all life on earth. With 45% of flowering plant species at risk of extinction, biodiversity loss is now the fastest it's ever been and our work has never been more vital.

Wild plants and fungi can help us to resolve the climate, ecological and societal challenges we face. Protecting them will lead to a world full of colour, beauty and life while allowing the wildlife which depends on them to thrive.

For more than 30 years, Plantlife has been the leading voice for wild plants and fungi, and we are at the heart of a global network accelerating



conservation work across the globe. We are working to enhance, protect, restore and celebrate wild plants through our conservation action – working across grasslands, mountains, woodlands, coasts, farmland and peatland.

Our goal is to raise awareness of how important wild plants and fungi are to life and to inspire more people to take action to help them thrive again.

Learning more about the wild plants and fungi around you and why they are so vital for nature and biodiversity can really help our mission.

Using the guide

This guide is an introduction to identifying fungi, lichens, plants and trees. Use this guide as a way of getting to know more about them. For more comprehensive ID guides, please see the back of this guide.

We've divided this guide into the three most common places people go walking:

- Grassland **page 10**
- Woodland **page 32**
- Cities and Towns **page 53**

Throughout this guide you'll find:

- Common and scientific names
- Colours
- Where and when to spot them
- Identification features
- Fun facts

In each habitat section, the species have been divided by colour, indicated by a banner on the side of each page.

So have a read, take this guide on a walk and start learning all about the beauty of nature. If you already know the plant you want to learn more about, then turn to the index at the back.

For people starting out, here are some simple tips:

- There is a ruler on the back of this guide to help measure specimens
- A hand lens or magnifying glass is helpful to see finer detail
- Take pictures to compare with the ID guide
- Keep notes of what you find and where you find species

On the next few pages we've included diagrams and explanations of some of the key terms you'll find useful when identifying plants and fungi.



Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*

Glossary

Agriculturally ‘improved’: refers to the agricultural operations carried out on many grasslands which can include spreading of fertiliser or manure, ploughing, and reseedling. An “unimproved” grassland is one which has had none of these agricultural operations and often has more diverse plant and fungal communities.

Apothecia: spore-producing fruiting body on upper surface of lichen. Can be a variety of shapes.

Basal: at the base – usually used to describe leaves which occur at the base of the main stem, which can be different to the leaves higher up the stem.

Biennial: a plant which completes its life-cycle over two growing seasons – usually just producing leaves in the first year, then flowering and fruiting/setting seed in the second year, then dying.

Calyx: the collective name for the sepals of a flower.

Cilia: whisker-like projections from the margin of a foliose lichen.

Crustose: crusty lichen species that grow directly on or just beneath the surface of the substrate it’s on. Looks like they are painted on.

Deciduous: not persistent/evergreen – shedding leaves at the end of one growing season.

Downy leaves: leaves covered with fine soft short hairs.

Elliptical (leaves): a broadly oval shape which is widest at or near the middle.

Evergreen: continuing to bear green leaves all year round, leaves being functional for more than one growing season.

Foliose: lichen species with flat leaf-like lobes. Lower surface of lobes attached to substrate.

Fruticose: shrubby lichen species that are branched and attached to the twig at one point.

Globular: globe-shaped or spherical.

Hybrid: a plant originating from a cross between species (usually within the same genera) or sub-species, which increases genetic variability in offspring.

Isidia: a vegetative reproductive structure on a lichen containing a discrete package of the algal and fungal partners.

Panicles: a branched flower cluster. A main stalk with flowering branches growing from it.

Pinnate: a term to describe a compound leaf, with its leaflets divided into two rows either side of the central leaf stalk, often with a terminal (end-point) leaflet.

Prostrate: a plant that spreads along or lies on the ground for most of its length, but with the tips turning upwards.

Rhizines: root-like attachments from the lower surface of a foliose lichen.

Rosette: a circular arrangement of leaves, usually basal.

Sepal: usually green and leaf-shaped, they enclose and protect the flower in bud and support it in bloom.

Shuttlecock (fern): overall shape of fern, where all fronds arise from the ground in a shuttlecock shape.

Soredia (lichens): powdery to granular propagules (a structure that propagates a plant e.g. spore) containing algal and fungal partners.

Spores: the fungal equivalent of seeds – microscopic particles that fungi use for reproduction, released from the fruiting body when mature.

Stipule: leaf-like appendage, usually in pairs at the base of the leaf stalk.

Substrate: the thing that a lichen, plant or fungus is growing on or in e.g. tree bark or rock.

Thallus: lichen body.

Toothed leaf-edges: where the edges of a leaf have a repeatedly pointed/jagged edge.

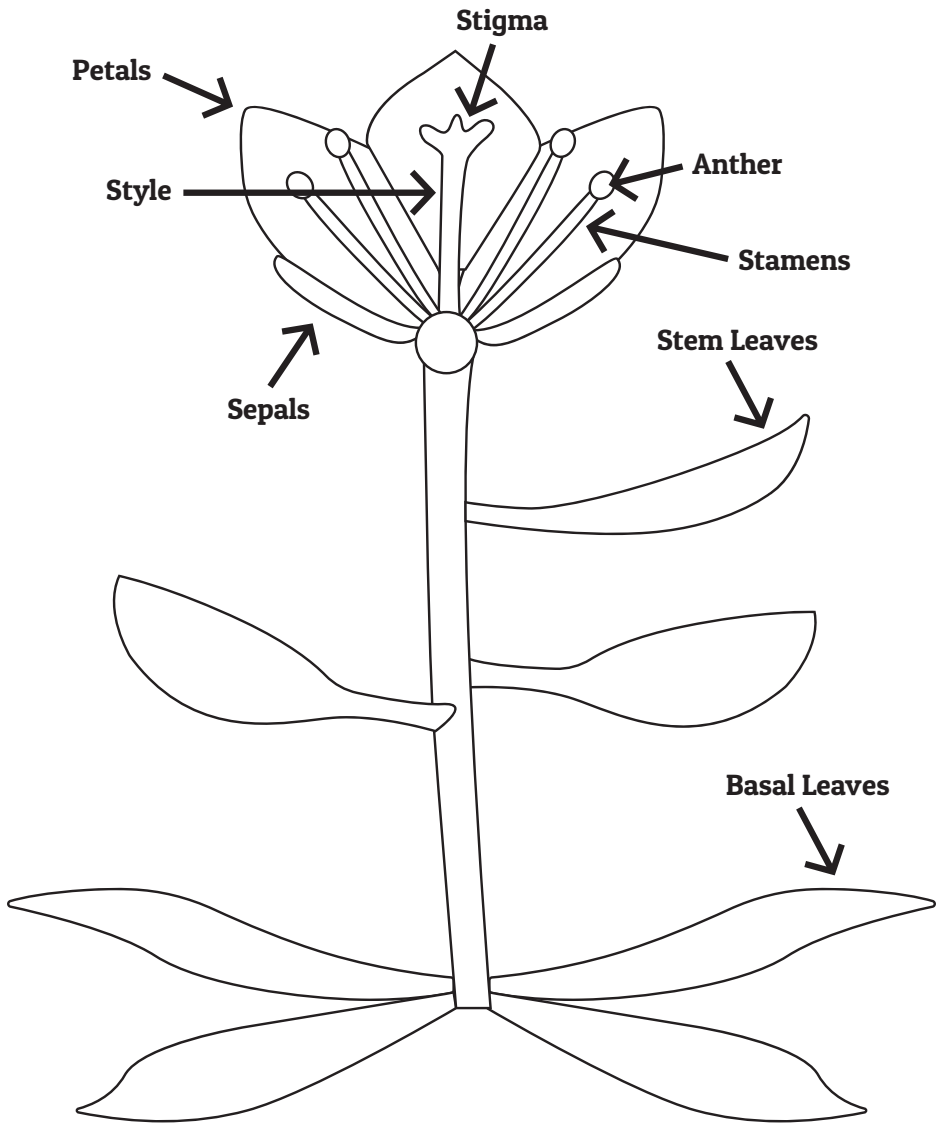
Trifoliate (leaves): having three leaflets, or leaf-lobes.

Undulating: having a wavy outline.

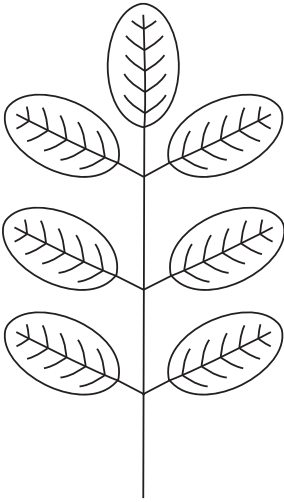
Veil: thin membrane that covers the cap and stalk of an immature mushroom.

Whorled: where three or more leaves arise from a stem at the same node, or growing-point, on it, forming a 'whorl' or circle of leaves.

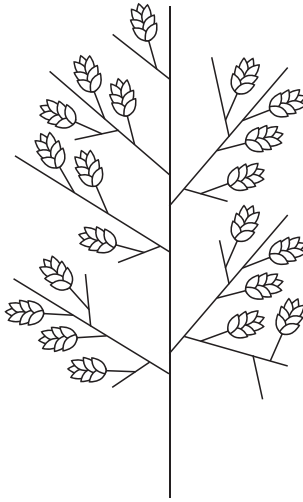
Plant anatomy



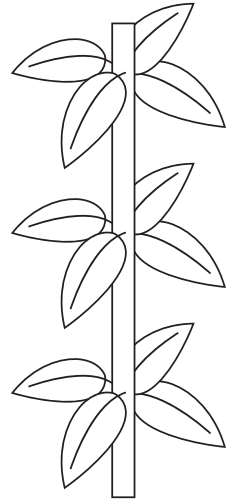
Leaf arrangements



Pinnate

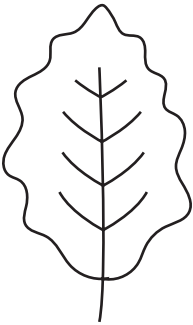


Panicles

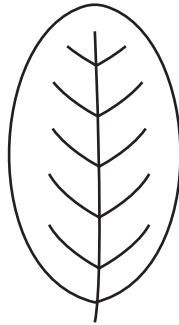


Whorled

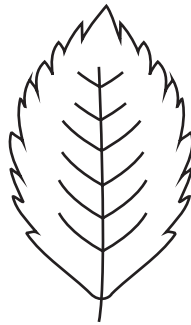
Leaf shapes



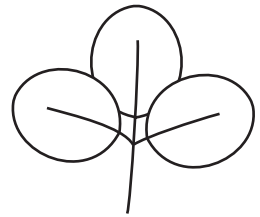
Undulating



Elliptical leaf

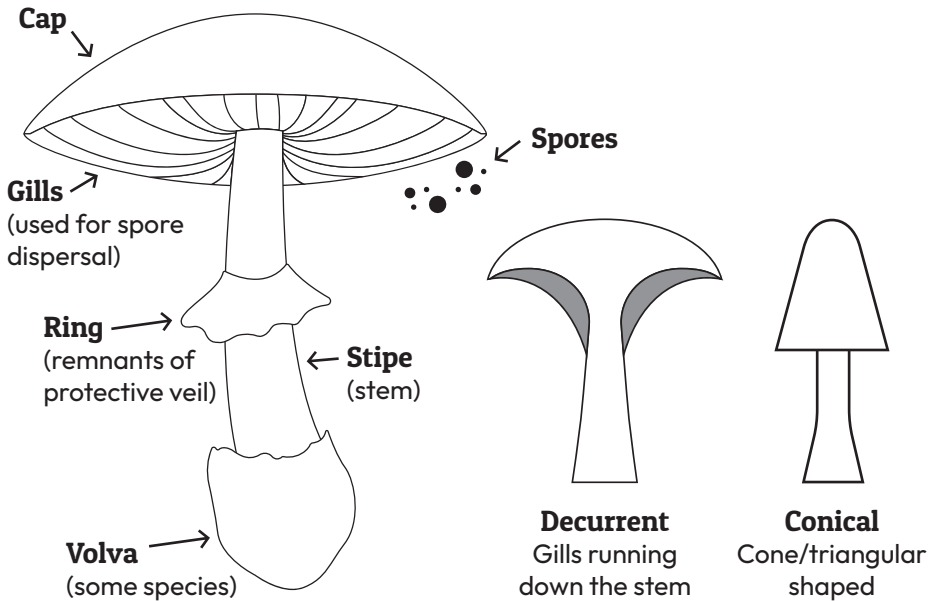


**Toothed
leaf-edges**

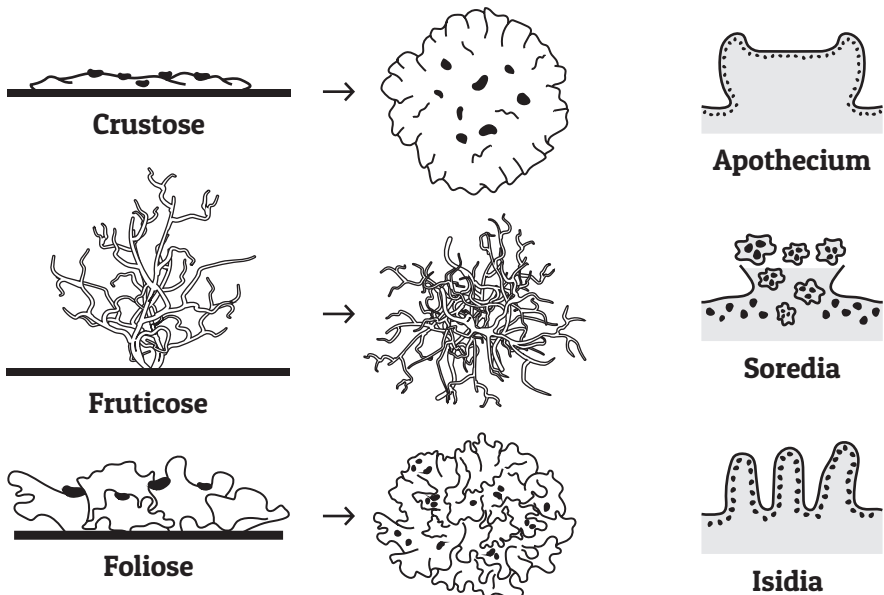


Trifoliate

Fungi anatomy



Lichen anatomy



Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*
Daisy *Bellis perennis*



Grassland

Imagine you are in a grassland. You can hear a bee buzzing, feel a gentle breeze, smell soft floral scents and feel delicate grasses beneath your feet. Is there anything better?

And just looking a little closer, these diverse and vibrant habitats are full to the brim with amazing wild plants and fungi.

Often seen as a defining feature of summer, flower-filled meadows and pastures are a great place to start learning more about wild plants.

In this section you can learn about 39 wild plants, eight fungi, four lichens and one tree.

What is a grassland?

A grassland is simply an area dominated by grasses such as a wildflower meadow, lawn, park or sports field.

Grasslands are full of amazing wild plants and fungi including Yellow Rattle, Meadow Waxcap and Dog Lichen.

From the machair plains of north-west Scotland to the rolling downland of southern England - there are many types of grassland across the UK. They vary depending on the soil type and pH (chalky, neutral or acidic) and whether the site is upland or lowland.



In fact, a single square metre of an ancient hay meadow may contain up to 40 species of wildflower.

But since the 1930s, 97% of wildflower meadows in the UK have disappeared.

Why grasslands are so special

Our grasslands, packed full of wild plants and fungi, can benefit people, nature and climate.

They can also:

- Provide habitat and food for wildlife
- Help clean air and water
- Store carbon
- Help mental and physical wellbeing

Our grasslands come alive in the spring and summer, with bursts of colour and wildlife. But in the darker months, they can still be a great place to explore waxcap fungi and lichens.

Ancient grassland with undisturbed soils can also be a haven for incredibly important fungi. In fact, knowing where waxcaps and other grassland fungi are thriving can help us pinpoint where fragments of ancient meadows survive so we can protect them for the future.

And for all those wildlife lovers, grasslands are not just great places to spot wild plants and fungi, also make sure to look out for bees, butterflies, birds and small mammals.

Why grasslands need our help

Species-rich grasslands are among the most threatened habitats in Britain and we're working across the country to restore them.

But they are facing significant threats from development, pollution, tree planting and intensive farming practices.

What is Plantlife doing?

We are working with farmers, landowners and community groups to take care of grasslands for the future and encouraging policymakers to prioritise their protection.

By learning more about the wild plants and fungi that grow in grasslands, you are helping to raise awareness of their importance for biodiversity and why we need to protect them.

Plantlife reserves where you can find grassland

Deepdale Nature Reserve

Visit in spring to experience a carpet of colour in the Peak District, on this limestone grassland.

Caeau Tan-y-Bwlch Nature Reserve

Discover rhôs pasture in North Wales, a marshy habitat, home to sometimes thousands of Greater Butterfly Orchids in summer.

Skylark Meadows Nature Reserve

If you want to visit a picture-postcard traditional species-rich meadow, then Skylark in Somerset will delight you with its rainbow of wildflowers in spring and summer.

Visit plantlife.org.uk for more information.



Pink Waxcap *Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*

Identification: The UK's only pink waxcap. Medium sized with a rosy pink cap in a distinctive conical shape, 3-7cm across. Cap expands and splits with age. Waxy texture. Gills and stipe white or very pale pink.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards - notably where less agriculturally 'improved', with a more westerly distribution across the UK.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Scarlet Waxcap *Hygrocybe coccinea*

Identification: Small to medium sized bright red waxcap. Cap is greasy in texture and up to 6cm, bell-shaped then flatter with age. Gills similar colour to cap with a paler edge. Stipe same colour as the cap, yellowing towards the base. Widespread and common.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards - notably where less agriculturally 'improved', with a more westerly distribution across the UK.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Meadow Waxcap *Cuphophyllus pratensis*

Identification: Distinctive medium/large waxcap. Cap is dry and a muted apricot colour up to 12cm across. Cap flattens with age. Gills are deeply decurrent and paler than cap.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Parasol *Macrolepiota procera*

Identification: Large, distinctive fungus, up to 35cm tall and 25cm across. Cap starts out very rounded, opening to a plate-like shape with an umbo (small projection in the centre). Whitish colour with reddish-brown scales fanning out from the centre. Stipe pale brown with a moveable ring.

Habitat: Grasslands, woodlands. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Shaggy Inkcap *Coprinus comatus*

Identification: Tall (5-15cm), white and shaggy to begin with. Cap is initially an elongated egg-shape becoming bell-shaped with an upturned black margin, with upturned scales creating shaggy appearance. Gills mature black and deliquesce (melt into ink-like substance).

Habitat: Grasslands, woodlands. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



White Spindles *Clavaria fragilis*

Identification: Clusters of worm-shaped, white fruiting bodies. Up to 10cm tall, generally straight to slightly curved, very fragile to touch.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards - notably where not agriculturally 'improved', with a more westerly distribution across the UK. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Petticoat Mottlegill *Panaeolus papilionaceus*

Identification: Bell-shaped cap with distinctive serrated pale edges from remainder of the veil. Cap up to 4cm, surface smooth and dull in a dark grey or brown colour, but drying pale grey. Gills maturing to mottled brown-black with black spore print.

Habitat: Grasslands in decaying dung. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Parrot Waxcap *Gliophorus psittacinus*

Identification: Small to medium waxcap that comes in a wide range of colours. Always partially green, however this may only be seen at the top of the stipe near gills. Very slimy cap (up to 4cm across), stipe often slimy too.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards, notably where less agriculturally 'improved'.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Dog Lichen *Peltigera hymenina*

Identification: Foliose lichen grows outwards in lobed, up-curved fans, growing up to 15cm. Smooth, glossy grey-brown upper surface becomes olive-green when wet. Flattened veins on creamy-white underside with simple rhizines attaching it to substrate. Curved reddish-brown discs are held upright like thumbs on the lichen edge.

Habitat: Often found in damp coastal grasslands and the turf around tree bases.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Jelly Lichen *Enchylium tenax*

Identification: Gelatinous black lichen forms crowded mounds of smooth, squidgy lobes. Varies in size. Lobes swell and round when wet. Often seen with reddish-brown apothecia that resemble wine gums with clear margins.

Habitat: Can be found on base-rich soils in open habitats such as grasslands and stabilising sand dunes.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Membranous Dog Lichen

Peltigera membranacea

Identification: A large (up to 30cm across) foliose lichen that fans outwards in flattened lobes, edges curving upwards. Brown when wet and pale grey when dry. Velvety 'frosted' upper surface with ridges resembling veins. Lower surface covered in white 'fang-like' long simple rhizines, anchoring it to the substrate.

Habitat: Can be found in short turf, including lawns and on dunes, as well as mossy boulders and rocks.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: The name Dog Lichen comes from the pelt-like surface of the thallus and the rhizines which look like fangs.



False Reindeermoss *Cladonia rangiformis*

Identification: Fruticose (shrubby) lichen growing in spiky tufts up to 5cm tall. Highly branched, resembling a miniature thicket of antlers. Each branch ends in clusters of two-to-three pointed tips. Small brown/purple reproductive structures found at tips in mature specimens.

Habitat: Can be common on basic or neutral lowland grasslands, coastal cliff tops and dunes

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: The surface of the 'antlers' appears mottled with small green splotches where groups of green algal cells cluster.



Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*

Identification: Short (15-30cm) with 10-40 blue (can also be white or pink) flowers 6-8mm long. Stem often branched with all leaves alternate.

Habitat: Grassland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*

Identification: Mauve to dark violet-blue flowers on long stalks 1.5-2.5cm across with all florets the same size. Pointed oval, opposite, undivided leaves.

Habitat: Grasslands, hedgerows, mountain slopes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: It's believed the common name comes from an old folk legend that the Devil was envious of the plants' many uses and bit its roots in anger.



Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*

Identification: Short and sprawling, stems with two opposite lines of hairs, paired leaves oval/lanceolate, toothed, flowers a graduated purplish-blue with a white central 'eye'.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges, woodland clearings.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*

Identification: Blue bells on slender stalks. Grows 15–30cm in open areas. Roundish leaves at base, linear leaves up stem.

Habitat: Dry grassland, heath, hedge banks, dunes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Due to its captivating colour and properties, Harebell has historically been used to make dye for fabric.



Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense*

Identification: Large blue flowers 2.5–3cm across, fruit stalks bent down after flowering. Leaves cut nearly to base, sticky and hairy above.

Habitat: Meadows, roadsides, grasslands, open woods, dunes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*

Identification: Violet-blue flowers 1–1.5cm in a compact head at the top of stems up to 20cm tall. Hairy leaves, oval to diamond-shaped, often purple tinged, scarcely toothed. Plant often mat-forming.

Habitat: Grassland, wood clearings, rough ground, lawns.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra sensu lato*

Identification: Perennial with tough, grooved stems up to 1m high. Flowers purple, shaped like a shaving brush, although sometimes with longer radiating flowers as well. Leaves narrow, oval shaped with stalks on the lower part of the stem, without at the top. Rough-hairy.

Habitat: Meadows, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*

Identification: Far-creeping herb. Flowerheads are in open clusters, 20mm x 10-15mm in size and a pinkish-purple. Lower leaves stalked, upper clasping stem, all deeply divided with spiny edges.

Habitat: Most habitats.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Each plant can produce over 100,000 fluffy seeds which also make a good insulator, tinder, and stuffing for soft toys.



Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*

Identification: Flowers blue-violet in heads 3-4cm wide, the petal lobes of each floret unequal, especially on the outer flowers. Leaves elongated, oval shape.

Habitat: Dry grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*

Identification: Solitary, bright purple-red flowerheads with elongated outer florets, 3-6cm across on stalks to 120cm. Leaves deeply lobed and toothed.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*

Identification: Scrambling plant with 10-40 blue-violet flowers in a one-sided cluster. Leaves pinnate with 8-12 pairs of leaflets and branched tendrils at leaf tip.

Habitat: Grassy places, bushes, hedgerows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*

Identification: Mat-forming, slightly scented herb with dense heads of pink, two-lipped flowers 3-4mm across. Leaves are paired and flat on four-angled stems that are very hairy on two opposite faces.

Habitat: Grassland, heathland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*

Identification: Variable plant, up to 60cm tall, sometimes with runners. Flowers rose-pink to white, 12-18mm across, with four petals.

Habitat: Damp grasslands.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: In some parts of England picking Cuckooflowers was considered unlucky. Also known as Lady's Smock.



Heather / Ling *Calluna vulgaris*

Identification: Bushy evergreen shrub up to 60cm tall. Pinky-purple flowers in dense spikes. Tiny leaves pressed against stem.

Habitat: Heaths, moors, rocky places, bogs, open woodland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: The Greek word 'kalluno' means to brush and this plant was traditionally used as a broom.



Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*

Identification: Petals deep-pink or white, each divided into four narrow lobes, giving their distinctive 'ragged' appearance. Leaves are narrow and hairless, but rough to the touch.

Habitat: Damp grassland, wetlands, ponds.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*

Identification: Upright plant, up to 40cm tall, bearing round heads of tiny greenish flowers that may be tinged red above and yellow below by the styles and anthers respectively. Basal rosette of leaves with 4-12 pairs of toothed leaflets. Stem leaves are smaller.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Sea Thrift *Armeria maritima*

Identification: Cushion-forming plant. The globular head of pink flowers is borne at the end of a stalk 5-30cm long. Flattened linear dark green leaves.

Habitat: Coasts, on cliffs and saltmarshes, inland on mountain ledges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Wild Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*

Identification: Pink-purple two-lipped flowers in dense clusters at the top of stems, up to 70cm tall. Stalked leaves in opposite pairs. Stems squarish.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fun Fact: Wild Marjoram can be used in recipes, although there are tastier varieties more suited to cooking.



Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*

Identification: Small greenish-red flowers in loose panicles on plant up to 30cm tall. Leaves arrow-shaped at base to 4cm long with side-lobes spreading or pointing forwards. All leaves stalked.

Habitat: Dry grassland, heaths, shingle beaches.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*

Identification: Spikes of yellow flowers, up to 60cm tall and 5-8mm in diameter. Softly hairy, often reddish stems; lower leaves pinnate with three to six pairs of larger toothed leaflets interspersed with smaller leaflets.

Habitat: Hedge banks, road verges, rough, grassy places.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*

Identification: Shiny yellow flowers with sepals down-turned when the flowers are fully open. Leaves three-lobed with the end lobe stalked. Stem swollen at the base.

Habitat: Grassland with a preference for chalk.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*

Identification: Shiny yellow flowers with sepals cupping the petals. Creeping runners root at the nodes. Leaves with triangular outline, three-lobed, the end lobe stalked. Flower stalk is grooved.

Habitat: Damp grassland, wasteland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*

Identification: Shiny yellow flowers with sepals cupping the petals. No runners. Leaves with a polygonal outline, 3-5 deeply divided lobes. Flower stalk ungrooved.

Habitat: Meadows, damp grassland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*

Identification: A mat-forming plant with deep yellow pea-flowers often red-tinged in clusters of two to seven. Leaves with five narrowly-oval leaflets, the lower two bent back by the stem so that leaves appear trefoil; no tendrils.

Habitat: Well-drained grassland, roadsides.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Rock-rose

Helianthemum nummularium

Identification: Spreading up to 50cm tall. Bright yellow, five-petalled flowers to 25mm across. Narrow, paired leaves, with a white woolly underneath and a pair of leaf-like stipules at their base.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Cowslip *Primula veris*

Identification: Deep yellow cup-shaped flowers clustered at the top of the stem up to 30cm tall. Rosette of wrinkly leaves each up to 125cm long, abruptly narrowed to the stalk.

Habitat: Open woods, grassy places, meadows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*

Identification: Yellow (or sometimes white, cream, pink or purple) pea-flowers in rounded, hairy heads, often paired. Up to 30cm tall. Leaves with narrow leaflets, the end one larger.

Habitat: Grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*

Identification: Golden-yellow flowers 2-3mm across on a creeping plant up to 60cm tall. Leaves are dark green and linear, in whorls of 8-12 around the weakly four-angled stems.

Habitat: Dry grassland with preference for chalk.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*

Identification: Yellow five-petalled saucer-shaped flowers 1.5-2cm across. Divided silvery silky leaves in rosettes and on long rooting runners.

Habitat: Wasteland, pastures, waysides, sand dunes, damp places.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Historically, Silverweed was used as padding in traveller's shoes.



Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*

Identification: Creeping plant with loose groups of yellow four-petalled flowers on long stalks. Leaves with three leaflets, but can look like five, due to two large leaf-like stipules at their base, without stalks.

Habitat: Heaths, moors, grasslands, bogs, mountainsides usually on acid soils, less often on chalky soils.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*

Identification: More or less hairless plant up to 50cm tall with spikes of yellow two-lipped flowers. Leaves unstalked, opposite, narrow and toothed. Stem black spotted.

Habitat: Grasslands, dunes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Named after the way that the ripe seed rattles.



Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*

Identification: Yellow flowers, 10-15mm across, with six to eight petals, in loose, branching clusters. Pairs of waxy, greyish, triangular leaves join forming a ring around the stem.

Habitat: Short, chalky grassland, dunes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Bladder Campion *Silene vulgaris*

Identification: Behind and holding the five white petals is the inflated and bladder-like calyx, purple-ish or yellow-ish in colour

Habitat: Rough grasslands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: In Roman mythology, the goddess Minerva turned a boy into a Bladder Campion when asleep instead of catching flies for her owls - the bladder representing his empty bag.





Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

Identification: Flowers in a dense spike, pale pink with a darker streak and dot markings, lower lip deeply-lobed. Broad grey-green basal leaves and smaller stem leaves, all usually with wide, purple blotches.

Habitat: Grasslands, woodlands.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Daisy *Bellis perennis*

Identification: Rosette of leaves with erect flower stems up to 15cm tall bearing flowers 1.5-3cm diameter, yellow in the centre with slender white outer petals, often reddish below. Spoon-shaped leaves all in a basal rosette.

Habitat: Short grassland, meadows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*

Identification: Large daisy-like flowers with dark green leaves on a plant up to 70cm tall. Basal rosette of long-stalked, spoon-shaped leaves; stem leaves alternate, deeply toothed and stalkless.

Habitat: Grassy places.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*

Identification: Greenish flower spikes 2cm long on long stalks up to 45cm tall. Basal rosette of long, narrow, hairy dark green leaves up to 25cm long, with prominent ribs beneath.

Habitat: Grassy places, roadsides, hedge banks, lawns.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*

Identification: Long-stalked white flowered umbels 7cm across, often with a dark red central flower. Rough hairy stem solid and ridged; very divided leaves with narrow segments.

Habitat: Grassland, cliffs, roadsides, hedge banks.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Identification: Umbel-like heads of small white (sometimes pink) flowers on tough stems. Very dissected feathery leaves which smell aromatic when crushed.

Habitat: Grassland, banks, waysides.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Juniper *Juniperus communis*

Identification: Sprawling evergreen tree/shrub 2-4m. Fruits ripen to black in their second to third year. Needles in whorls of three, 4-20mm long, with a white band on upper surface.



Habitat: Grasslands, scrub, heaths, moors, birch woods, pine woods.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Woodland

A walk through a woodland is one of the best ways of experiencing the seasons. Stroll through a glade in spring, with sun shining through the gaps in the trees, and you'll discover lush woodland flora emerging, and the scent of fresh leaves.

In autumn, listen to the satisfying crunch beneath your feet as the rusty leaves fall around you. And even in winter, there is still plenty to marvel at on the snow and frost-covered branches.

As well as being one of our favourite spots for a walk, woodlands provide a unique habitat for our wild plants and fungi.

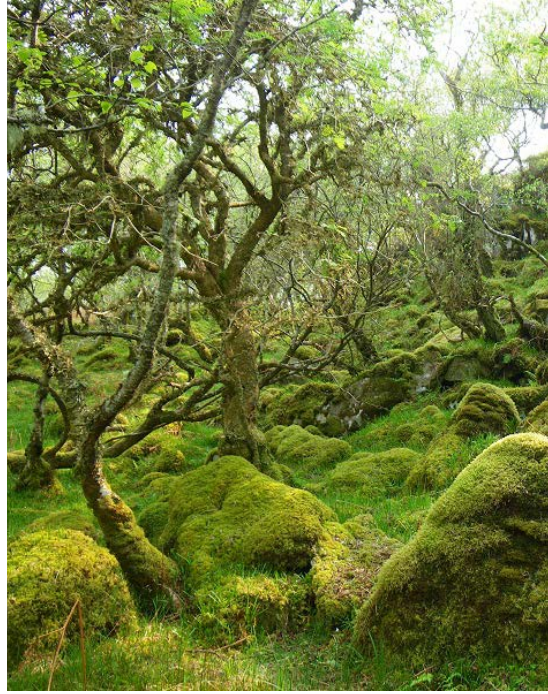
In this section, learn about 11 trees, five lichens, 26 plants and 10 fungi species that you might find in a woodland.

Woodland and related habitats

A woodland is an area which is populated by trees, and the species that depend on them.

Woodlands come in all shapes, sizes and places – from urban woodlands to the temperate rainforests lining the UK's western coast.

Each woodland is home to different soils, wild plants and fungi, and the wildlife that thrive in these magical places.



Here are just a small handful of the types of woodland you could find near you:

- Temperate rainforest
- Native broad-leaved woodland (both recent and ancient)
- Plantation woodland
- Open parkland / pasture woodland
- Native caledonian pine forest
- Orchards

One of our most special types of woodlands for wild plants and fungi are temperate rainforests.

Temperate rainforests are woodlands that are found in areas that are influenced by the sea with high rainfall, humidity and a damp climate. They are a mosaic of trees, open glades, crags, ravines, rocks and gorges. Usually having difficult topography has saved them from past clearance.

Here you'll find ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. These ancient plants pre-date flowering plants, trees and even the dinosaurs.

Why do woodlands like temperate rainforests need our help?

More than 94% of woodlands in the UK are affected by air pollution. This excess nitrogen in the air affects which plants, fungi and lichens can grow there and can damage the health of trees too.

Lichens are made up of at least one fungus and either an alga or cyanobacterium, or sometimes both.

Although lichens are tiny, they provide food, shelter and microhabitats for wildlife, in addition to contributing to protecting the wider environment.

Some rare lichen species are only found in temperate rainforest areas.

What is Plantlife doing?

Plantlife's role in protecting temperate rainforests is pivotal. We work in rainforest zones across the UK providing specialist advice, engaging landowners and volunteers, advocating for policy changes and raising the profile of this under-celebrated habitat.

Plantlife reserves where you can find woodland

Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve

Hidden away in Kent, Ranscombe Farm is home to a wealth of fungi and classic woodland species with walks suitable for all ages.

Three Hagges Woodmeadow Nature Reserve

Find a mosaic of broadleaf woodland species alongside wildflower meadows in Plantlife's newest reserve in North Yorkshire.

Joan's Hill Farm Nature Reserve

Notable for its wildflower displays in spring, Joan's Hill Farm in Herefordshire is also home to a traditional orchard, which provides habitat for rare invertebrates.

Visit [plantlife.org.uk](https://www.plantlife.org.uk) for more information.



Beefsteak Fungus *Fistulina hepatica*

Identification: Soft reddish bracket looks like raw meat and oozes a red blood-like liquid when cut. Underside consists of rounded pores that are white or yellowish, bruising and maturing reddish.

Habitat: Found on deciduous trees, usually oaks. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria*

Identification: Classic fairytale toadstool. Red cap, that starts rounded and flattens, covered with white spots that are remnants of the protective veil. Sometimes with no spots if heavy rain washes them off. White gills and stipe, with a ring and a volva (egg-like structure at base of stipe).

Habitat: Woodlands, grasslands, heaths usually associated with birches or conifers. Poisonous.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Scarlet Elfcup *Sarcoscypha austriaca*

Identification: Bright red disc fungus found in winter or early spring. Up to 5cm across, usually attached to a buried twig or branch by a short stem. Easily breaks on handling.

Habitat: Dead wood, usually found in leaf litter. Widespread and relatively common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fun Fact: In European folklore wood elves used them as cups to drink morning dew.



Porcelain Fungus *Oudemansiella mucida*

Identification: White or ivory, but sometimes greyish when young. Caps up to 10cm across, rounded then opening up. Slimy and translucent, hence the name 'porcelain'. Gills similar colour to cap, stipe with small ring.

Habitat: Living or dying wood of deciduous trees, mainly Beech, sometimes high up. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Stinkhorn *Phallus impudicus*

Identification: This is a fungus that is often smelt before it is seen. It starts with a jelly filled egg-like structure that opens to allow the fruiting body to protrude. The thick white stem is tipped with a slimy brown-green mucus (gleba) that attracts flies. This wears away to reveal a white almost honeycomb surface.

Habitat: Found in soil in woodlands, singly or in groups. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus*

Identification: Bracket-like fruiting body up to 40cm across, comprised of several thick, overlapping, undulating brackets. Fan-shaped brackets, thick and fleshy with a yellow surface, darkening with age, texture like that of cooked chicken. Underside consists of yellow circular pores.

Habitat: Living on dying wood of deciduous trees, mainly oaks. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula*

Identification: Distinctive fungus, reminiscent of an ear, with jelly-like texture and shape. Surface generally smooth but undulating with folds and wrinkles. Brownish-red to pale pink-purple.

Habitat: Found on living or dead wood of deciduous trees and shrubs particularly Elder. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Black Bulgar *Bulgaria inquinans*

Identification: Black/brown button-shaped fungus appearing in groups on dead wood. Starts out globular, later expanding and flattening to create a black shiny disc with a blackish-brown felty raised margin.

Habitat: Dead wood of deciduous trees (Beech and Oak). Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



King Alfred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica*

Identification: Rounded, black, hard fungus firmly attached to dead wood. Starts off reddish-brown and turns black, smooth texture dusted with black spores, becoming shiny with maturity. Flesh becomes brittle and charcoal-like. Cut in half reveals distinctive concentric circles.

Habitat: Dead wood of deciduous trees (usually Ash and Beech).

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Sycamore Tar Spot *Rhytisma acerinum*

Identification: Found as black-brown splotches with a lighter outline on Sycamore leaves from late summer onwards. This fungus matures and releases spores when on the ground and new Sycamore leaves are emerging in spring.

Habitat: Sycamore leaves.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Greenshield Lichen

Flavoparmelia caperata

Identification: Large (up to 20cm) foliose lichen with apple-green rounded lobes, brighter when wet. Surface wrinkled towards centre and centre often becomes covered in soredia giving a grainy or powdery appearance.

Habitat: Fairly tolerant of nitrogen pollution, usually seen on tree trunks and twigs of acidic bark, but also rocks and synthetic surfaces.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Script Lichen *Graphis scripta*

Identification: Whitish to grey and usually smooth. Apothecia resemble black lines and squiggles, ranging from 1-7mm long and 0.2-0.3mm wide with raised margins and a single slit-like opening.

Habitat: A common species on smooth-barked trees, more so in the west.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Crotle Lichen *Parmelia saxatilis*

Identification: Foliose lichen with grey thallus. A network of fine white ridges and flecks creates a 'hammered metal' effect with isidia on the surface. Underside dark with rhizines.

Habitat: Fairly pollution-tolerant and grows on a range of substrates including acidic bark and rocks. Widespread and common across the whole British Isles.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Oak Moss *Evernia prunastri*

Identification: Grows in short tufts (up to 10cm tall) of flattened branches with forked tips, often with a net-like pattern of ridges on the surface. Pale grey-green to pale yellow-green on upper side, white underneath. May see patches of grainy soredia but apothecia are rare.

Habitat: Widespread and common but sensitive to air pollution. Prefers well-lit conditions.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Pepperpot Lichen *Pertusaria pertusa*

Identification: Pale green-grey thallus, with a lumpy appearance owing to the warty growths which crowd the surface. Within these there are multiple apothecia which look like dark dots puncturing their surface. They resemble holes in a pepper pot, hence the common name.

Habitat: A distinctive lichen that is common on trees across the UK.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Bugle *Ajuga reptans*

Identification: Creeping plant with upright dense leafy flower spikes 10-30cm tall of blue flowers. Opposite leaves sometimes bronzy, hairless and scarcely toothed. Stem square with hairs on two opposite sides.

Habitat: Damp woods, hedge banks, meadows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*

Identification: Low growing herb. Flowers 15-25mm across with rounded blue-violet petals and darker veins, spur paler than petals. Leaves are heart-shaped in a basal rosette and on flowering shoots.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows, grasslands.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



English Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*

Identification: Narrow tube-like violet-blue flowers, drooping down one side of the stem, strongly scented with up-rolled tips. Narrow leaves 1-2cm wide.

Habitat: Woodlands, hedgerows, grassland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Spanish Bluebell *Hyacinthoides hispanica*

Identification: Flowers all around the stem and more upright than English. Flowers upright and trumpet-shaped, pale blue, white or pink, scentless, anthers pale blue. Leaves are wider than English Bluebell, up to 35mm wide.

Habitat: Gardens, woodlands, also hedgerows. Invasive and non-native.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*

Identification: Flowers in a loose spike, red-purple, with two raised sepals and a lip with a paler, dotted patch. Glossy green leaves with lengthwise blotches, in a rosette and on stem.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows, grasslands.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*

Identification: Flower spikes, up to 1.8m tall, with many large purple tubular flowers. Large (up to 30cm) downy leaves.

Habitat: Open spaces, woodland clearings, heaths, mountainsides.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*

Identification: Flower spike 30-80cm tall with red flowers in whorls. Leaves oval to heart-shaped, bristly with an unpleasant smell (like old dishcloths) 4-9cm long with stalks 1.5-7cm.

Habitat: Woods, hedge banks.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Rhododendron

Rhododendron ponticum

Identification: Tall, evergreen shrub. Violet or pink bell-shaped flowers, 4-6cm long and are borne in rounded clusters. Leaves are leathery, dark green, with untoothed edges.

Habitat: Highly invasive non-native species, one of the biggest threats to UK temperate rainforests. Wood and heaths on acid soil.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*

Identification: Dull yellow-purple flowers with distinctive orange-seeded capsules. Plant smells strongly of meat when crushed. Leaves 70cm long up to 2cm wide, dark green evergreen flopping.

Habitat: Woods, hedge banks, scrub.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*

Identification: Plant grows to 50cm with pink flowers 2cm across. Leaves divided to base; sometimes reddish; hairy with a strong, unpleasant smell.

Habitat: Woods, hedgerows, shady places, scree, shingle, trails, garden weed especially by shady walls.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

Identification: A large plant (1-3m) often found in clumps with large 'policeman's helmet' purple flowers 4cm long. Reddish stem, leaves with small red teeth at edge, in whorls of three or opposite.

Habitat: Incredibly invasive and non-native. Severe threat to native plants along streams, rivers, and in wet woodlands and damp places.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Red Campion *Silene dioica*

Identification: Deep pink flowers 2cm across on a softly hairy plant to 1m tall. Opposite, oval, softly hairy leaves. Hairy stems.

Habitat: Lowland, shady sites, woods, hedge banks, scree, cliffs.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*

Identification: Star-like yellow flowers 2-3cm across with 7-12 petals - one of the earliest flowers. Rosettes of glossy dark green mottled long-stalked leaves.

Habitat: Damp woods, meadows, stream-sides, hedge banks.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*

Identification: Yellow buttercup-like flowers 2-4cm across on a mound of kidney-shaped, shiny leaves.

Habitat: Wet meadows ditches, fens, wet woodland, by rivers.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage

Chrysosplenium oppositifolium

Identification: Tiny yellowish green flowers 3-5mm on a low growing patch-forming plant. Square stem and paired leaves.

Habitat: By streams, in boggy woods, on wet mountain ledges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Primrose *Primula vulgaris*

Identification: Pale yellow flowers to 3cm borne singly on stalks. Rosette of wrinkled leaves tapering gradually, each up to 15cm long.

Habitat: Woods, hedge banks, grasslands, sea cliffs, mountains.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Cleavers *Galium aparine*

Identification: Tiny white flowers on a sprawling plant reaching 3m tall, stems, leaves and fruit bearing sticky bristles which stick to clothing like Velcro. Leaves in whorls of six or eight, fruits of two half nutlets.

Habitat: Cultivated and arable land, wasteground, woodlands, scrub, open ground, gardens.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*

Identification: One of the earliest flowering of the Carrot family. 60-100cm tall with pure white flowers 0.3mm across in umbels 2-6cm wide. Stems hollow, without spots; pinnate (fern-shaped) leaves with pointed leaflets.

Habitat: Hedgerows, woodland edges, roadsides.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

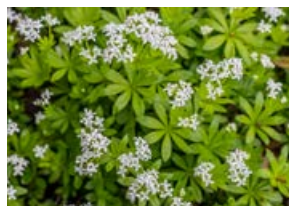


Ramsons / Wild Garlic *Allium ursinum*

Identification: Flower stalks up to 45cm tall and a round head of up to 20 white flowers. Pointed leaves arising from the base up to 25cm long and 7cm at the broadest point, smelling of garlic.

Habitat: Woodland, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*

Identification: Grows in carpets with loose heads of small funnel-shaped white flowers. Plants are 15-30cm tall, upright and unbranched. Four-angled stems; leaves elliptical in whorls of six to nine; tiny forward-pointing prickles on the edges.

Habitat: Woods.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba*

Identification: Small fragrant greenish-white flowers on a plant that scrambles over trees and shrubs and can reach 30m tall. Paired leaves divided into pointed leaflets.

Habitat: Hedgerows, scrub, woodland, especially on chalky soil.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fun Fact: In autumn it is known by many as old man's beard.



Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*

Identification: Star-like white flowers with five to eight petals, often pink underneath. Long-stalked stem leaves divided into three.

Habitat: Woodlands, old hedge banks, upland meadows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*

Identification: Solitary white flowers and trifoliate leaves to 10cm tall. Delicate yellow-green trefoil leaves.

Habitat: Shady, dry oakwoods, beechwoods, rocks.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*

Identification: Large, deciduous fern 0.5m-2m tall, with highly branched fronds. Fronds are large and stalked, giving a branched appearance. Sori, when present, are found on the underside, along the leaf margins.

Habitat: Large stands can develop on open hills, moorland and heathland. Widespread and abundant.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Hartstongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*

Identification: Medium-sized fern with fronds to around 60cm, in a 'shuttlecock' growth form. Our only fern with undivided strap-shaped leaves.

Habitat: In damp woodlands and along shaded streamsides. Widespread and common.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum*

Identification: Flower is designed to attract flies for pollination and club-shaped spike releases a urine-like odour. Fruit is a spike of bright orange berries. Shiny arrow-shaped leaves often with dark spots.

Habitat: Hedgerows, woodland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*

Identification: Tree up to 45m tall and open. Leaves opposite, pinnate. Dark green above. Black buds. Smooth bark when young. Fruit with a single wing.

Habitat: Found on base-rich and damp soil. Native in south-east England and south-east Wales.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Hazel *Corylus avellana*

Identification: Downy zig-zag stems, hazel nuts. Beautiful miniature bright-red, female flowers are one of the first flowers to appear in spring, with lemon-yellow male catkins.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*

Identification: Evergreen tree up to 30m tall with needle-like leaves and small cones. Leaves 3-8cm long (longer when young), often twisted, borne in pairs; bark often orange at least in the upper parts.

Habitat: Native to woodlands in Scotland but widely planted and self-sown throughout the UK.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Goat Willow *Salix caprea*

Identification: Deciduous small tree up to 10m tall. Goat Willow is very similar to, and hybridises with, other willows such as Grey Willow. This is also called 'pussy willow' due to the large furry silver male catkins in early spring, before the leaves appear.

Habitat: Woodlands, hedgerows, damp and rough grassland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Beech *Fagus sylvatica*

Identification: Tree to 40m, domed and much-branched. Smooth grey bark; slender long-pointed bud; prickly seed case with two nuts. Lower branches often grow on one plane so leaves can catch the light. In autumn, leaves turn yellow, red and brown and often linger all through winter.

Habitat: Well drained soil. Native in south-east England and south-east Wales.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Beech woodland is the ideal habitat for many species such as helleborines, Porcelain Fungus and King Alfred's Cakes.



Common Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*

Identification: Shrub or tree up to 10m tall with flat-topped flower clusters and red berries in autumn. Deeply divided leaves, thorns on stem. Each of the red berries should have a single persisting stamen (hence scientific name 'mono-gyna'). If there are two then it might be Midland Hawthorn, or a hybrid between the two.

Habitat: Hedge banks, woods, wood margins.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fun Fact: The sweet intense aroma of the blossom has connotations with death, notably bad luck to bring indoors, as it was compared in medieval times to that of the Great Plague. Which may be due to the blossom's content of trimethylamine, one of the first main chemicals produced by decaying living tissue. Also notably this attracts many flies to the blossom.



English / Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*

Identification: Deciduous tree up to 45m tall. Distinctive oval leaves with rounded lobes and a very short stalk, almost stalkless. 'Pedunculate' means 'stalked', and refers to the stalked acorn.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows, parkland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Oak supports 108 species of fungus, many of which are entirely dependent on Oak.



Field Maple *Acer campestre*

Identification: Deciduous tree to 20m - the UK's only native Maple. Small leaves 4-7cm across, three to five-lobed, untoothed. Flowers are a greenish-yellow, 5-6mm in small clusters with the leaves. Downy, winged fruit ('helicopters'), in horizontal pairs. Autumn leaves are a burnt yellow.

Habitat: Woodlands, hedgerows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Holly *Ilex aquifolium*

Identification: Evergreen tree/shrub up to 20m tall. Flowers borne in the axils of leaves have four white petals. Leaves glossy with several very sharp points.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Holly at Christmas has many origins and it is often associated with bringing good luck and protection during this season.



Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*

Identification: Deciduous tree up to 25m tall. Bark red/brown, peeling and paper-like. Leaves oblong, toothed, dull green above, with two red glands on the leaf-stem just below the leaf. Flowers small, white, appear with leaves. Fruit are small cherries.

Habitat: Woodland, hedgerows.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Wild cherries can be as tasty as cultivated cherries, but in the UK they only become sweet when late spring into June is very sunny and warm. Badger and fox scat are often full of cherry stones at this time of year.



Yew *Taxus baccata*

Identification: Evergreen tree up to 20m tall, bark red/brown and flaking. Trees are male or female, flowers unremarkable. Leaves needle-like, shiny dark-green above, grey/green below, pointed, in two rows either side of central stem. Fleshy red berry (poisonous, as is every part of the tree).

Habitat: Hedgerows, in woodland usually in small numbers, often in churchyards where younger specimens may often be Irish Yew. Poisonous.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: There are ancient Yew trees in the UK that are thousands of years old.



Cities and Towns

Living in a city or town doesn't mean you can't explore and appreciate nature. Even among our high-rise buildings and paved streets, wild plants and fungi are still everywhere, popping their heads up among the infrastructure.

From White Dead-nettle to Blackening Waxcap, wild plants and fungi continue to fight their way to the surface. And what a pleasure they are to see!

These urban species are easy to find and prove you don't need to travel far to enjoy nature.

In this section you can explore 11 wild plants, eight fungi and five lichens.

Best places to spot wild plants

When we think of our urban areas, like towns and cities, we often forget the patchwork of wild and wonderful habitats filled with fascinating species that can be found.

It's time to take a closer look at the trees lining the walk to the shops for bright patches of lichen, or to spend a while counting the unmown wildflowers and grasses in our greenspaces in summer.



If you'd like to get started looking for nature in your neighbourhood, here are the best places to begin your search:

Plants

Find wild plants growing through cracks in the pavements, as well as in parks, playing fields, road verges, graveyards and along riverbanks.

Fungi

Not just found on dead wood, you can spot fungi growing in the grass of graveyards, road verges and in small areas of woodland.

Lichen

Often hidden in plain sight stuck on pavements, gravestones, walls, letter boxes and on some tree branches.

And don't forget your own back garden! Our urban gardens are a sanctuary for wildlife and plants, and you'll be amazed at what you find if you leave a space for nature.

How you can help wild plants and fungi in cities and towns.

Urban plants face their own challenges in a fast-paced changing world. Pressures from development and air pollution, through excess nitrogen in the burning of fossil fuels, create their own set of obstacles for species to grow.

But there are ways you can help!

Whether you live in a flat, a suburban neighbourhood or on a terraced street – there are plenty of ways you can help our urban fungi and flora thrive. Here are some to get you started:

Let your garden grow wild

Consider leaving your lawn unmown in the summer months by taking part in #NoMowMay or leave the edges of your garden for nature year-round.

Join a community group that cares for local parks and reserves

Friends' groups and community groups are the perfect way to meet like-minded neighbours and make an impact for nature.

Record what you find

By recording the species you find, and sharing with your local records centre, with the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) or as part of the National Plant Monitoring Scheme, you'll help rare plants and fungi be protected for the future.



Blackening Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica*

Identification: A variety of orange and yellow colours, discolouring black with age and upon bruising. Eventually turning completely black. Cap is very conical, remaining so, often with black areas especially on the top.

Habitat: Grasslands, churchyards. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*

Identification: Yellow cap up to 7cm across, orange-tan in the centre. Gills a distinctive yellowish green, darkening with age. Stipe same colour as cap with a ring and often curved. Glows faintly green in ultraviolet light.

Habitat: Often in clusters on dead or dying wood in woodlands, gardens, hedges, grasslands. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Candlesnuff Fungus *Xylaria hypoxylon*

Identification: Club-like fungus that looks like a burnt candle wick when young. Fruit body is up to 6cm tall, black at the base and powdery white from the mid point to the tip. Sometimes simple in shape, but often branching into antler-like shapes.

Habitat: Dead wood of broadleaved trees, in woodlands, gardens, parks. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Variable Oysterling *Crepidotus variabilis*

Identification: Found on woody debris and twigs as very small oval to kidney-shaped fruit bodies up to 3cm across. Surface white to buff and finely felty. Gills radiating outwards, initially white, ageing pinkish brown.



Habitat: Woody debris in gardens, woodlands, parks. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus*

Identification: Found on dead or dying birches. Thick, hoof-shaped bracket to 30cm wide. Surface smooth coloured cream, ochre or greyish with a white margin. Pores on underside are extremely small, creamy white.



Habitat: Dead or dying birches in gardens, woodlands, parks, grasslands. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fairy Ring Champignon *Marasmius oreades*

Identification: Cap up to 5cm across, orange-ochre or tan coloured but drying dull cream or buff, starting rounded and becoming flatter. White gills and very tough stipe that is pale buff/cream, often darkening at the base.

Habitat: Often in rings in grasslands, parks, gardens, playing fields. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*

Identification: Several species of Honey Fungus within the genus are very similar looking. Generally all yellow-brown in colour, rough texture on cap and yellowish ring on stipe with yellowish brown scales below ring. Gills whitish, but maturing to brown. Forms dense clusters.

Habitat: Dead or dying wood in woodlands and on the site of old stumps, gardens, hedges, grasslands. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Turkey Tail *Trametes versicolor*

Identification: Multicoloured, thin bracket fungus. Up to 10cm across in a semicircular shape, with a thin wavy margin. Tough leathery texture. Concentric lines of colours from beige to black, usually with a cream margin. Pores on underside are small and whitish or cream.

Habitat: Dead or dying wood anywhere. Widespread and common.

Fruiting Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Firedot Lichen *Caloplaca flavesces*

Identification: Golden-yellow crust-forming lichen with long, narrow lobes growing outwards from the centre to form flat rosette splotches. Whitish centre which cracks with age. Deep orange, disc-shaped apothecia with prominent margins cluster in the centre.

Habitat: Rocks, walls, pavements, exposed cement. Often on old limestone in churchyards.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Yellow Wall Lichen *Xanthoria parietina*

Identification: Bright yellow to murky grey-green, leafy lobes. Colour depends on where it's growing – green (shade) or yellow (sunlight). Yellow/orange apothecia are grouped in the centre.

Habitat: Woodland, car parks, trees, walls, fenceposts and almost any surface where it can grow undisturbed. Can indicate high levels of nitrogen air pollution.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Disc Lichen *Lecidella elaeochroma*

Identification: Small to large, grey-green or yellowy-grey patches. Smooth or grainy surface covered with apothecia without margins (looks like winegums). May be convex or concave and with or without a black rim.

Habitat: Very common crustose species, found on smooth bark on trunks and twigs.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Fanfare of Trumpets *Ramalina fastigiata*

Identification: A fruticose lichen that grows up to 5cm, with recognisable 'trumpets' – the apothecia (fruiting bodies) that stand out at the tips of branches. Grey-green irregularly shaped and flattened branches, often wrinkled. Branches end with round and flattened fruits.

Habitat: Widespread and common with concentrations in southern England and coastal areas.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Little Ciliated Lichen *Phycia tenella*

Identification: Small, foliose lichen with lobes branching outwards, often curling and upright. Prominent hair-like structures (cilia) extend from the lobe margins creating a 'messy' appearance. Lobe tips curve back to reveal powdery soredia.

Habitat: Can be found on twigs, bark and branches and sometimes walls and rocks in urban areas. Can indicate high levels of nitrogen air pollution.

Time To See: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Buddleja / Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii*

Identification: 1-5m tall shrub with spikes of fragrant lilac (sometimes purple or white) flowers. Greyish oval leaves; long arching stems.

Habitat: Waste ground or bare places. Non-native and is now well established in bare areas.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*

Identification: Biennial herb growing up to 2m. Flower is an egg-shaped head. Opposite leaves have prickles and join around the stem, catching water.

Habitat: Open woods, stream banks, roadsides, rough ground, grassland, marginal habitats, railway banks.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D





Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*

Identification: Whorls or purple-red flowers 1-1.8cm long at the base of leaves. Downy, aromatic heart-shaped leaves with stalks; those near the flowers may be purple-tinged.

Habitat: Arable and waste ground, hedgerows, roadsides, gardens.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Rosebay Willowherb

Chamaenerion angustifolium

Identification: Forming tall drifts of pink in mid-late summer, up to 2.5m tall. Leaves alternate, lanceolate, slightly toothed with a vein running close to the margin. Flowers pinkish-purple, 20-30mm, in a long narrowing raceme, petals slightly notched.

Habitat: Disturbed sites and wastelands, road verges.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*

Identification: Small four-petalled white flowers on long stalks held horizontally from the main stem. Fruits distinctive, flat and heart-shaped, held erect. Basal rosette of variable leaves - undivided to deeply lobed. Stem leaves clasping.

Habitat: Grassy places, farmland, edge of pavements/paths.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



White Dead-nettle *Lamium album*

Identification: Hairy plant 20-60cm tall with white flowers 2-3cm long, spaced whorls at the base of leaves. Stems four-edged; leaves opposite, toothed oval to heart-shaped with stalks, look like nettle leaves but don't sting (hence 'dead'-nettle).

Habitat: Hedge banks, roadsides, wasteland.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*

Identification: A low-growing erect plant, the stem usually purplish, with bright shiny green much-lobed leaves. Composite flowerheads are small and yellow but rayless, 4-5mm. White feathered seeds.

Habitat: Disturbed soil, wasteground.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea*

Identification: A densely tufted plant, up to 30cm tall, with yellow-green much-divided leaves. Most obvious when yellow flowers appear - bell-like and dangling 12-30mm.

Habitat: Walls, rocks, buildings. Naturalised introduced species.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Although it may not look like it, Yellow Corydalis is in fact a part of the Poppy family.



Scarlet Pimpernel *Lysimachia arvensis*

Identification: 5–20cm sprawling or prostrate plant with bright red (or sometimes blue or pink) flowers borne singly on long stalks from leaf axis. Oval leaves opposite or whorled; square stem.

Habitat: Waste ground, open and arable land, sand dunes.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Maidenhair Spleenwort

Asplenium trichomanes

Identification: A small, evergreen, wall fern, which grows in an open rosette, with thin, dark brown to black frond stems, and short, roundish pinnae. Older fronds often shed their pinnae, leaving the bare stems that resemble black hairs ('trichos' is Greek for hair).

Habitat: Walls, rocks, buildings. Widespread and common.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D



Reedmace *Typha latifolia*

Identification: Clumps of linear leaves 1–3m with distinctive brown sausage-shaped seed heads. Flattened grey-green leaves, all arising from a basal shoot.

Habitat: Ponds, streams, shallow water.

Flowering Times: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Fun Fact: Reedmace has historically been used in traditional building practices.

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Further Reading

You can find lots of useful information on our website: plantlife.org.uk

Fungi

Grassland Fungi: A Field Guide

by Elsa Wood & Jon Dunkelman. Second Edition 2020. Published by Monmouthshire Meadows Group. ISBN: 9780957642423

Collins Fungi Guide: The Most Complete Field Guide to the Mushrooms & Toadstools of Britain & Ireland

by Stefan Buczacki, Chris Shields & Denys Ovenden. Published by Harper Collins (William Collins). ISBN: 9780007466481

Plants

How to Identify Wild Plants, Trees and Shrubs in Britain and Ireland

by Francis Rose. Revised and expanded Second Edition by Clare O'Reilly, 2006. Published by Penguin Random House Children's UK (Frederick Warne Books). ISBN: 9780723251750

Collins Wildflower Guide

by David Streeter. Second Edition 2016. Published by Harper Collins (William Collins). ISBN: 9780008156756

Lichen

Lichens: An Illustrated Guide to British and Irish Species

by Frank S Dobson. Seventh Edition. Published by the British Lichen Society. ISBN: 9780956529107

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