

Flowering plants

Hemlock

famously poisonous



A **notoriously poisonous** plant, *Conium maculatum* has a repellent smell when its leaves are crushed, helping to ensure that accidental poisonings don't occur very often - even livestock studiously avoid it. This biennial plant prefers damp places and can grow in huge colonies on waste ground, riverbanks and ditches, but can also be seen along roadside verges. It produces umbels (umbrella-like clusters) of white flowers in June and July.

A tall, upright plant that can grow up to 8ft tall, hemlock can be distinguished by the distinctive and unpleasant, mousy smell of its foliage and its purple-spotted stems. Its leaves are finely divided and large, and its flowers are small and white and appear in umbrella-like clusters.

Cut Leaved Cranesbill



The cut leaved cranesbill (*Geranium dissectum*) is an annual. It can be upright or rather sprawling. The leaves are very heavy dissected, with seven narrow lobes / sections. It may be found on waste land, banks and hedgerows.

The flower has 5 petals, they are notched and pink to purple in colour. The sepals end in a bristle. The leaf is palmately lobed - it is cut or rather divided into (7) deeply incised sections. The leaf is hairy and the edge (leaf margin) may have a red / purple coloration.

Gypsywort



Lycopus europaeus is a medium to tall slightly hairy plant, not aromatic. Leaves oval to elliptical, pinnately lobed at the base, toothed and mostly stalked. Flowers small, white 4 mm, in dense whorls at the base of the uppermost leaves. Stamens 2, protruding

St Johns Wort



Hypericum perforatum is common and grows to about 90cm with translucent dots on the leaves and black dots on the petal edges, with flowers 2 to 3cm across. Perforate St John's-Wort can be found in open woods, along hedgerows and roadside verges, and on waste ground. Its bright yellow flowers appear from June to September and the blood-red juice that exudes from its stems has made it a focus for much myth and ritual.

Dewberry



Looking very like a slightly over-ripe blackberry, *Rubus caesius* is easily overlooked as just another bramble. The waxy coating on the berries gives them their name can also make them look mouldy. Closer inspection and tasting will reveal that their are perfectly ripe although often not quite as sweet as blackberries and having fewer ‘drupelets’ – the individual blobs that make up the fruit. The plants themselves are usually smaller and less vigorous

Blackberry



Rubus fruticosus leaves are divided into three or five serrated, short-stalked, oval leaflets, dark green on top and pale beneath. Leaf stalks and mid-ribs are prickly. Flowers: clusters of white or pink flowers appear from late spring to early summer. They are 2–3cm in diameter with five petals and many stamens. Fruits/seeds: the fruit, known as a blackberry, is 1–2cm in length and ripens from green through red, to deep purple and finally black when ripe in late July.

Mugwort

mildly poisonous



Artemisia vulgaris leaves are green on top and white underneath, they have pointed tips and purplish stems. They are deeply lobed and have an aromatic scent, similar to rosemary or sage. The flowers are numerous, grow in clusters and are red to yellow. This plant contains the chemical thujone, which is said to promote lucid dreams. The plant might be **poisonous in large doses**. Skin contact can cause **dermatitis** in some people. Probably unsafe for **pregnant** women as it may stimulate the uterus to contract and induce abortion.

Stinging Nettle

Stings!



A very common plant, the **stinging** nettle can be found growing in gardens, hedgerows, fields, woodlands and many other habitats. *Urtica dioica* are great wildlife attractors: caterpillars of the small tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies use them as foodplants; ladybirds feast on the aphids that shelter among them; and seed-eating birds enjoy their autumn spoils. To avoid the more painful way of identifying a stinging nettle, look for the hairs on its stem, its drooping, catkin flowers, and oval, toothed leaves.

Hops



This hedgerow climber flowers between July and September. *Humulus lupulus* leaves are deeply divided with 3 to 5 lobes, arranged opposite to each other, which feel rough to the touch with toothed margins. Flowers are green-yellow in colour. Male flowers grow in a loose branching group, whereas female flowers are catkins, shaped like a cone, and these develop into the fruit which is cone-shaped and initially light green, turning to brown when it has ripened. It has a distinctive scent, a bit like garlic, apples and yeast.

Bindweed



Calystegia sepium (bellbind or hedge bindweed) climbs with strong twining stems, has large heart-shaped leaves and large white trumpet flowers.

Convolvulus arvensis (field bindweed) is a weaker-stemmed plant, with smaller white or pink trumpet-shaped flowers, but otherwise similar in appearance to bellbind.

Cleavers / Goose Grass / 'Sticky Willy'



Known for its characteristic Velcro-like stems, cleavers is an annual wildflower native to the UK. *Galium aparine* is a climbing plant, using the hooks on its stems to aid its scrambling progress. The hooks on its fruits attach to animals (and us) to help disperse its seeds.

Covered in tiny hooks, the sticky nature of cleavers is enough to identify it easily. Otherwise, look for whorls of up to eight narrow leaves, sprawling stems, and tiny white flowers. The small, rounded fruits are also covered in hooks.

Creeping Cinquefoil



A perennial plant with limp stems reaching a height of just 10 to 15cm, *Potentilla reptans* spreads via long rooting runners. Flowers 12 to 25mm across have five yellow notched petals surrounding 20 stamens and numerous pistils. The petals are backed by a much smaller five-lobed calyx. Stalked flowers are borne solitarily in leaf axils.

Creeping Buttercup



Ranunculus repens is 2 to 3 inches tall; its hairy, lightly spotted leaves are divided into three lobes with frayed edges. Between May and August the flowers appear on short stems, glossy five-petaled YELLOW cups.

Purple Loosestrife



Lythrum salicaria is a perennial plant, growing to between 1 and 2m in height and often forming dense colonies of erect stems flushed with red or purple arise from a single rootstock and carry a sequence of whorls of three downy stalkless leaves.

The flowers grow in tall spikes, ranging from white through pink to deep purple but typically rosy-purple. Individual flowers are 10 to 20mm in diameter and have 12 stamens surrounded by five or more often six petals.

Marsh Woundwort



Medium to tall, hairy, faintly aromatic plant to 2 metres, stems erect. *Stachys palustris* has leaves oblong to lanceolate with a heart shaped base, blunt toothed, only the lower stalked, the upper unstalked. Flowers purple, 12 to 15 mm long, the whorls forming a dense spike interrupted below. Difficult to tell apart from Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) which was listed as being on site in the 1950s

Dock



Broad-leaved Dock is a common plant that grows on waste ground, in hedgerows, gardens and roadside verges, and next to water all over the UK. An abundant perennial, flower spikes appear from June to October. It is well-known as the herbal remedy for Stinging Nettle irritations, although some doubt it really works. *Rumex obtusifolius* is a tall plant with very large, wavy-edged, oblong leaves that have red stems on their undersides. Flower spikes have numerous clusters of reddish-brown flowers.

Hogweed / Cow Parsley / Cow Parsnip



Hogweed is a native plant (unlike its alien relative, giant hogweed) which is abundant in hedgerows, roadside verges, waste grounds and rough grasslands. As a member of the carrot family (an umbellifer), *Heracleum sphondylium* displays large, umbrella-like clusters of creamy-white flowers between May and August (although it can flower all year-round) which are attractive to a range of insects.

Wetted Thistle



Carduus crispus is a biennial plant with alternate, spiny, pinnately lobed leaves. They are white and cottony beneath. The Wetted Thistle has weaker spines than most Thistles have. The stems are downy and spiny winged, just like the similar looking Marsh Thistle. The Wetted Thistle emits a mild, somewhat sweet scent.

Creeping Thistle



Medium to tall with horizontal stems just above the ground which are usually branched, but not winged or spiny. *Cirsium arvense* leaves are spiny, the upper leaves unstalked. Flowerheads pale purple or lilac, 15 to 25 mm, fragrant, solitary or from 2 to 5 together, stalked.

Lighter pink than most other thistles, and stem not winged, or with very short wings. As with all *Cirsium*, the pappus-hairs (the silky white hairs attached to the seed - the thistledown) are individually feathery or branched.

Field Forget-me-not



Myosotis arvensis is a low to short plant, softly hairy. Branched at the base. Basal leaves in lax rosette. Flowers bright grey-blue saucer shaped. 3 to 5 mm calyx closed in fruit the tube with numerous hooked hairs.

Field Rose



Rosa arvensis, native to Europe, is a rambling rose of the hedgerows and woodland, quite scarce in the north. Its long arching stems produce pure white scented flowers from early summer onwards. These give rise to round red rose hips in autumn. Attractive to insects and birds for the hips eventually.

Dog Rose



Common it might be, but what a sight this plant makes in June in the hedgerows. Roses are difficult to identify because they hybridise so readily but this plant had the hooked prickles, arching stems and flower shape of *Rosa canina* and was one plant of many in the hedgerows. The fruits called hips contain a high concentration of Vitamin C and were collected during World War 2 in Britain so that Rose-hip Syrup could be made from them. They can also be used to make tea, jam and even soup. The flowers are a source of perfume.

Common Vetch



Known as the common vetch, garden vetch, vetch vicia, tare or simply vetch, this native plant is a member of the pea family and a sprawling annual that is also a nitrogen fixing leguminous plant. An edible plant, vetch's flowers and leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. *Vicia sativa*'s flowers are pink and purple with seed pods along the stems of the plant which can also be eaten, and taste much like peas, being a member of the pea family. The annual soil quality is important as it needs to drop seeds each year.

Meadow Vetchling



Clambering plant to 120 cm with winged stems. *Lathyrus pratensis* leaves have tendrils, and one pair of leaflets, linear lanceolate to elliptical. Flowers yellow 10 to 16 mm, in long stalked racemes.

Ox Eye Daisy



A typical grassland plant, the oxeye daisy thrives on roadside verges and waste ground, as well as in traditional hay meadows and along field margins. Its large blooms appear from July to September and are so bright that they appear to 'glow' in the evening, hence the other common names of 'moon daisy' and 'moonpenny'. It is easy to identify *Leucanthemum vulgare* by its large, round flower heads that appear on single, tall stems. It has spoon-shaped leaves at its base and thin, jagged leaves along the stem.

Hemp Agrimony



Hemp-agrimony is a tall, perennial plant found in damp grassland, marshes, fens and wet woodlands, and along riverbanks. The frothy, pinkish flower clusters on *Eupatorium cannabinum* appear from July to September and are very attractive to all kinds of insects, including butterflies like the Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral. Its common name comes from the resemblance of its leaves to Hemp, although it is not related to it.

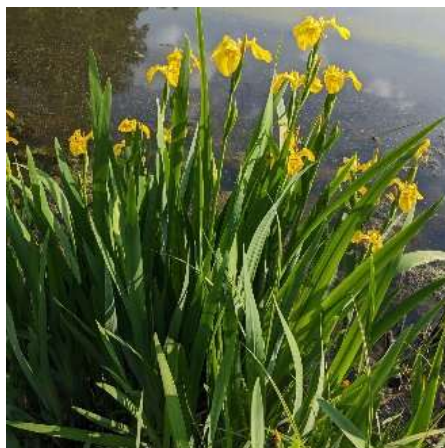
It is a bushy plant with trifoliate leaves (with long, toothed leaflets) that appear in opposite pairs along its reddish stems. These stems end in domed clusters of tiny, tubular, pink flowers.

Wild Angelica



Angelica sylvestris is a common and robust plant of damp meadows, ditches and wet woodlands. As a member of the umbellifer family, it displays large, umbrella-like clusters of purple-tinged flowers between July and September which are attractive to a range of insects. These flowers smell like the garden variety of angelica which is used to make sweet cake decorations. The umbels of Wild angelica flowers are robust and rounded, and tinged with red. Its purple stems are hollow, and its lower leaves are divided.

Yellow Flag Iris



The water-loving yellow iris can be found along the margins of waterways and ponds, and in wet woodlands, fens and saltmarshes. Often mingled among other reedbed plants, its large, bright yellow flowers appear between May and August; they are thought to be the **inspiration for the fleur-de-lis symbol**, which is used by the Scouts and also in heraldry.

Iris pseudacorus has tall reed stems that are sometimes branched. Its long, narrow leaves are grey-green and sword-like, and may droop at the ends. Its large, yellow flower petals fold back on themselves and hang down around the outer edges of the flower.

Skull Cap



Skullcap can be found on damp ground, such as marshes, fens, riverbanks, pond margins and canalsides. This delicate flower blooms between June and September and is pollinated by long-tongued bees; it is also the only foodplant of the Skullcap Leaf Beetle - a yellowy-brown beetle with a black head and four spots on its back.

Scutellaria has violet-blue, tube-like flowers that have two 'lips' and sit in pairs in the leaf axils (where they join the stem). They have square stems and oval leaves, with toothed margins, that appear in opposite pairs. The closely related Lesser Skullcap has pink flowers.

Ground Ivy



Despite its name, Ground-ivy is actually a member of the dead-nettle family and is not closely related to Ivy. It is an evergreen, creeping plant of woodlands, hedgerows and damp ground. It often forms clumps, spreading by means of overground runners that frequently root. It has a strong smell and violet flowers that appear from March until June.

Glechoma hederacea has kidney-shaped, bright green leaves, with toothed margins, that stick out from the stem on longish stalks. Its violet flowers appear in whorls of two to four and are funnel-shaped. It smells strongly of blackcurrant or even tom-cats.

Water Mint



Water Mint prefers damp habitats and grows in water. Its leaves can be used in the same way as other mints, flavouring cooking and drinks. It flowers from July to October and spreads vigorously using its creeping runners.

Mentha aquatica has hairy, oval, toothed leaves that appear in whorls around the reddish stems. It produces dense clusters of lilac-pink flowers at the ends of its stems.

Ladies Bedstraw



The frothy, yellow flowers of lady's bedstraw scent the air of our grasslands, chalk downlands, meadows, heaths and sand dunes with honey. The stems can be so dense with flowers that they carpet the grass with yellow from June to September. Dried, *Galium verum* flowers have the scent of new-mown hay; its name is derived from the tradition of stuffing straw mattresses with it, particularly those of women about to give birth. Lady's bedstraw has small, narrow leaves that appear in whorls on its angular stems. The stems carry frothy heads of tiny, yellow flowers that appear in dense clusters.

Comfrey (various)



Common comfrey is a hairy plant of damp ground and is found beside rivers, in fens and ditches, and on roadside verges and waste ground. It often grows in clumps and displays clusters of bell-shaped, pinky-purple or white flowers from May to July.

The comfrees,, *Symphytum*, are a small group, but can be difficult to tell apart from each other as hybrids are common. Common comfrey has large, oval, hairy leaves, and clusters of drooping, tubular flowers that are pinky-purple in colour unlike White comfrey.

Silverweed



Silverweed is a creeping, trailing plant that can be found on rough grassland, roadside verges, sand dunes and waste ground. Its yellow flowers appear between June and August among the creeping mats of its silvery, downy leaves which remain all year-round.

A low-growing plant, *Potentilla anserina* has silvery leaves divided into twelve pairs of leaflets with toothed edges. Thin, red creepers form new stems and its saucer-shaped flowers have five yellow petals.

Fleabane



Pulicaria dysenterica flowers look a lot like giant yellow daisies and they are in fact closely related to the common daisy you'll find in your garden lawn, being part of the aster family, which is one of the largest families of flowering plants in the world.

Fleabane is so-called for its apparent ability to ward off fleas and throughout history it was dried, strewn or burnt in an effort to keep them at bay.

Common Ragwort



The daisy-like, yellow flower heads of *Jacobaea vulgaris* may be pretty enough to the casual observer, but they belie the **poisonous** nature of this plant. It is a very beneficial plant for many insects. Ragwort is the foodplant of the black-and-red cinnabar moth: sometimes its black-and yellow-barred caterpillars cover the plant, totally stripping the leaves. Common ragwort is a biennial, flowering in its second year from June to November. Common Ragwort is a relatively tall-growing plant that has clusters of yellow, flattened flower heads, and leaves that look 'feathery' because they are very divided.

Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Reeds

False Oat Grass



False oat-grass is a tall, fluffy-looking perennial of grasslands, roadside verges and disturbed ground. One of the most common grasses, it is the grass that so many of us catch in our hands and absent-mindedly strip of its seeds as we walk along. *Arrhenatherum elatius* mainly flowers from May to September, but can continue until the first frosts. The loose flower heads of False Oat-Grass have groups of brownish, oval spikelets (containing the flowers) with bristles at their tips. The long stem often turns brown after flowering.

Rough Meadow Grass



Once established in mixed grassland it grows out down at the base of the sward, creeping to colonise any gaps. It persists as an under-storey plant able to tolerate shading from taller grasses and herbs, and only rarely, if ever, becomes dominant. Whilst young it grows as loose tufts. With a good supply of moisture *Poa trivialis* grows luxuriantly and spreads out with numerous slender creeping stolons. In dry conditions it remains short and tufted and the plants acquire a reddish purple tinge. Its flat or folded leaves are generally low to the ground often mixed at the base of other grasses. Its flowering stems are slightly rough to touch with branched heads; these are green and closed in moist conditions, open and tinged red in dry conditions.

Cocksfoot



Cocksfoot grass is perennial and commonly grows in dense tussocks which can be 20–140cm tall. Its key characteristic is a flattened stem base which separates this grass from others. *Dactylis glomerata* leaves are grey-green in colour, hairless, approximately 20–50cm long and 1.5cm wide.

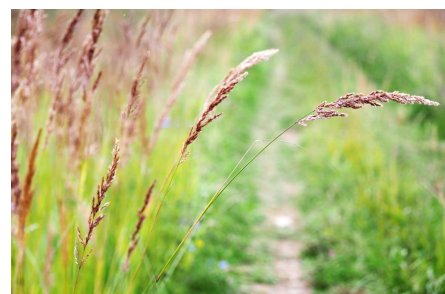
Flowers are mostly green with red or purple ends but turn a pale brown when ready to seed. Seeds are dense and spiky when first emerging, becoming open and branched as it matures. Seeds are very small, with more than a million per kilogram.

Wood Brome / False Brome



Brachypodium sylvaticum, commonly known as False Brome or Wood Brome, is a species of perennial grass in the genus *Brachypodium*. It is native to Europe and Asia and is commonly found in woodlands, forest edges, and rocky or gravelly areas. It forms dense clumps of narrow leaves and can grow to a height of up to 1.8 meters tall. The plant produces spikes of small, greenish-brown flowers in the summer.

Red Fescue



Tuft forming, 15 to 80 cm tall usually with creeping rhizomes and surface runners. Basal leaves and those of runners are all bristle like and up to 40 cm long with groove on upper side. Those of the flowering stems are flat when fresh 0.5 to 3 mm wide. Not always red tinged. The basal leaves are rolled into tubes. The panicle is branched, but closes up after flowering. Each spikelet contains two or more florets which are awned. The sheath edges of *Festuca rubra* overlap.

Barren Brome



One of the commonest weedy grasses that can reach 80 cm. The panicle is very loose and drooping with rough branches which are much longer than their spikelet. Spikelets are compressed, V shaped with long awns and usually turn purplish when ripe. *Bromus sterilis* panicles are branched. Each branch bears only one spikelet. Each spikelet is shorter than its stalk (peduncle) with three or more florets clearly projecting beyond the glumes. The spikelets are compressed and awned.

Yorkshire Fog



Yorkshire-fog is a tufted, grey-green and downy plant of meadows, woodland rides, waste ground and lawns. Its purple-tinged flower heads appear from May to August. It is valuable to wildlife and is the main foodplant of the caterpillars of the small skipper butterfly. Yorkshire-fog has grey-green leaves and cylindrical, tightly packed flower heads that have a purple-red tinge to their tips. Both the leaves and the flowers of *Holcus lanatus* have a 'soft' appearance. A tall grass to 200 cm, stout and smooth stemmed, reed-like. Forms dense stands by means of creeping rhizomes. Panicles 5 to 25 cm long, spikelets sometimes flushed purple. The panicle is branched. Each spikelet contains only one fertile floret usually completely enclosed by its glumes. Many leaves are more than 1cm wide. *Phalaris arundinacea* often grows by water

Reed Canary Grass



Large, densely tufted grass that grows to 120 cm tall. *Deschampsia cespitosa* leaves are up to 5mm wide with strong parallel ridges and furrows on the upper side. Panicles with whorled spreading branches.

Tufted Hair Grass



Crested Dogs Tail



Once grown as a crop and used for making bonnets, Crested dog's-tail is a common, tufted, perennial grass of grasslands and meadows. *Cynosurus cristatus* does not like to be waterlogged. Growing in compact tufts, Crested dog's-tail is a rather stiff-looking grass with narrow, green leaves. It has short, upright flower spikes with a tightly packed cluster of spikelets (containing the flowers) arranged in a long, rectangular shape.

Horsetail



Horsetails belong to an ancient family of their own of *Equisetum* from the time of the dinosaurs and have no closely related existing relatives. The leaves have reduced to scales and the stem is the main photosynthetic organ. Stems contain a large amount of silica. A coarse-looking perennial, it tends to occur in patches. It grows up to 80 cm tall and stems are wiry with whorls of needle-like branches. The fertile stem ends in an organ that produces spores (sporangium). The plants have wiry stems which feel gritty when rubbed due to the high silica content. Leaves are like bristles. The rhizomes are black.

Hard Rush



The grey-green, rigid stems of hard rush are a distinctive feature of damp ground, such as wet grassland, riversides, dune slacks and marshes. These stems were used for basket-making and weaving in times past, but are thought to be poisonous to livestock. The brown flowers of hard rush appear from May to July. Hard rush has tall, rigid, grey-green stems without leaves; they are stiffer and more brittle than those of the similar Soft rush. *Juncus inflexus* has brown flowers which are borne in loose clusters.

Jointed Rush



This is a very common rush which as you would expect grows by streams, lakes, dune slacks and in boggy places generally. *Juncus articulatus* is a very variable plant sometimes being quite small and in other habitats growing to 80 cm. The joints referred to are distinct septa (hard bits) inside the slightly flattened leaves. You can feel the joints as bumps if you pull a leaf between a thumb and forefinger. This is not diagnostic as other rushes such as *Juncus acutiflorus* (Sharp-flowered Rush) also have septa in their leaves.

Bulrush / Great Reedmace



Great Reedmace, also known as 'Bulrush', is a familiar plant of freshwater margins, such as the edges of ponds, lakes, ditches and rivers. Its impressive stance - with long leaves and tall stems - makes it stand out from other wetlands plants. Its sausage-like flower heads are unmistakable; these appear from June to August, but *Typha latifolia* persists through the winter, often dying back to a brownish colour from its usual green. It has tall stems bearing cylindrical, brown flower heads that are topped by a spire of smaller, male flowers. It also has long, wide, grey-green leaves.

True Bulrush



The True Bulrush, *Scirpus Lacustris*, is a native shallow water, marginal pond plant. It produces bold cylindrical dark green stems stiff needle-like leaves that arise from a creeping rootstock. Produces clumps, that gradually expand.

Hairy Sedge



Creeping, tufted plant 30 to 70 cm tall. *Carex lasiocarpa* roots are often much branched with leaves and sheaths hairy, and with long beaked, downy fruits. Inflorescence is elongated with 2 or 3 male spikelets at the tip, and several erect, widely spaced oblong female spikelets with long leaf like bracts.

Glaucous / Blue Sedge



Glaucous Sedge, or Blue Sedge, has long, narrow leaves and small, inconspicuous brownish or greenish flowers that grow in spikes, the leaves of *Carex flacca* are typically blue-green, giving the plant a glaucous appearance.

Common / Black Sedge



Common Sedge, or *Carex nigra*, is a member of the sedge family, *Cyperaceae*, and is commonly found in wet meadows, marshes, and woodland edges. It typically grows to a height of around 30-90 cm, with slender, triangular stems that are often bent over towards the ground. The leaves are long and narrow, typically around 3-10 mm wide, and have a dark green colour. The flowers are arranged in compact, spike-like clusters that are typically 2-4 cm long. The flowers themselves are small and inconspicuous, with a brownish-green color.



Also seen in the 1950-58 Dernford Fen survey by Bishop's Stortford School's Natural History Society