

OENANTHE, FINE-LEAVED SPECIES

Four British species of *Oenanthe* have pinnate leaves with narrow segments - *O. fistulosa* L., *O. pimpinelloides* L., *O. silaifolia* M. Bieb. and *O. lachenalii* C. C. Gmel. From time to time they are confused by the unwary and this may, in part, be due to inadequate descriptions in some Floras. Three of the species are widespread in S England, but *O. silaifolia* is scarce with relatively few sites remaining. For a useful account of all *Oenanthe* species with a key, illustrations and notes see Walls (1995), and additional notes by Southam (1991, 1996).

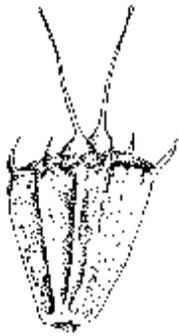
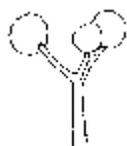
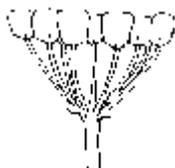
The roots of *O. pimpinelloides* are mentioned in some Floras as unique in having 'potatoes' but *O. silaifolia* may also have globose tubers (Southam 1996); on conservation grounds this character should not be used for identification. The Table and notes should enable a satisfactory determination to be made without this.

The lowest leaves can be very helpful in the spring but by late summer, when the plants are usually noticed, they have withered and fallen off. The lowest leaves of both *O. pimpinelloides* and *O. lachenalii* have cuneate to ovate lobes. In the former, the leaflets are cuneate-based with sharp teeth (much as in the leaflets of *O. crocata*) and the upper leaves have narrower leaflets. In the latter, they are blunt and rounded without any sharp teeth, although they may be bluntly toothed. In *O. silaifolia* the leaflets of both upper and lower leaves are linear-lanceolate and acute.

Reference Southam, M. (1991). *BSBI News* **58**: 9-10.
Southam, M. (1996). *BSBI News* **71**: 22-24.
Walls, R. M. (1995). *British Wildlife* **6(3)**: 148-151.

Authors F. Rose & R. M. Walls, November 1987, updated 1997.

Plant Crib

	<i>O. fistulosa</i>	<i>O. pimpinelloides</i>	<i>O. silaifolia</i>	<i>O. lachenalii</i>
Fruit				
Umbels in fruit (not to scale)	3-4 spherical partial umbels; rays very stout 	Many partial umbels, crowded and flat topped 	Intermediate 	Many partial umbels, separate and round 
Bracts	0(-1)	Several	0-1	Several
Stem	Very thin walled, hollow	Thick-walled, pith-filled or hollow at base, ridged, average diameter 5 mm	Hollow and strongly ridged, to 12 mm diameter	Readily compressed, ridges shallower usually about 5 mm diameter
Leaflet of lowest leaf	Shortly stalked, ovate, lobed 	Oval, deeply toothed, cuneate bases (generally similar to <i>O. crocata</i> , but narrower) 	Linear-lanceolate, acute, similar to upper leaves 	Blunt, elliptical, lobed to spatulata 
Typical habitat	Damp meadows, marshes, often on rather acid peat	Old meadows, grassy banks, verges, usually rather acid well-drained soil	Damp alluvial hay meadows, flooded with base rich water in winter	Brackish coastal grasslands and salt marshes, and calcareous inland fens

Note

1. There is still debate as to whether the stems of *O. pimpinelloides* are hollow throughout or not; they are probably both!