

TARAXACUM SECTION *CELTICA*

Section *Celtica* species are mostly found in the western and northern districts of the British Isles, being largely restricted to wet meadows in southern England. Elsewhere, they occur in a range of habitats from mountain cliffs to lane banks, grasslands and even somewhat saline habitats, but like the Section *Naevosa* species they are rarely found in waste places as ruderals or weeds. 34 species are known from the British Isles, and all (except perhaps *T. nietoi*) are native here. The British Isles forms the centre of the distribution of the section, with much more diversity here than in other countries, and no less than 19 species (56%) are endemic to these islands. Many endemics are rare and local, different species being restricted to e.g. Brecon (v.c. 42), Upper Teesdale and north Pennines, The Solway Firth (v.cc. 70, 73), and Orkney (vc. 111), while three species from the Low Countries are southern rarities, two of them halophytes. In all I have omitted 11 rare species from this account as we do not yet have a good photographic record of them. It is very unlikely that any would be encountered without a targeted search in their localised areas.

Features of Section *Celtica*

- *Celtica* species are never gross like some *Ruderalia* and usually have rather flat, simply lobed leaves.
- Like *Hamata* species, involucre are often pruinose and bluish-green and exterior bracts do not exceed 12 mm in length.
- Unlike the *Hamata*, the innermost exterior bracts are usually patent to erect, not arcuate.
- Also unlike any *Hamata*, many *Celtica* species lack pollen and have stigmas which dry yellow. These characters are also rare in section *Ruderalia*.
- Taken together, these features are closely allied to those in section *Naevosa*, from which *Celtica* differ chiefly by an absence of spotting on the upper leaf surface. In the *Celtica*, only *T. olgae* and *T. berthae* regularly have spots. These species are rare and localised in the north-west, and are related to *T. nordstedtii* which is why they are included here and not in section *Naevosa*. Occasionally *T. nordstedtii* itself also shows spotting, usually in extreme-Atlantic conditions.

Like *Naevosa*, most *Celtica* are tetraploid ($2n = 32$) or hexaploid ($2n = 48$). *Hamata* and *Ruderalia* species are invariably triploid ($2n=24$).

Plant Crib 3

1a. Species lacking pollen (check stigmas with a lens) (2a-2b)

2a. Stigmas yellow, concolorous with the ligules in the fresh and dry condition (3a-3b)



Concolorous, pollenless stigmas in *T. ostenfeldii*

3a. Exterior bracts spreading to recurved (see above), ligule stripes solid, brown

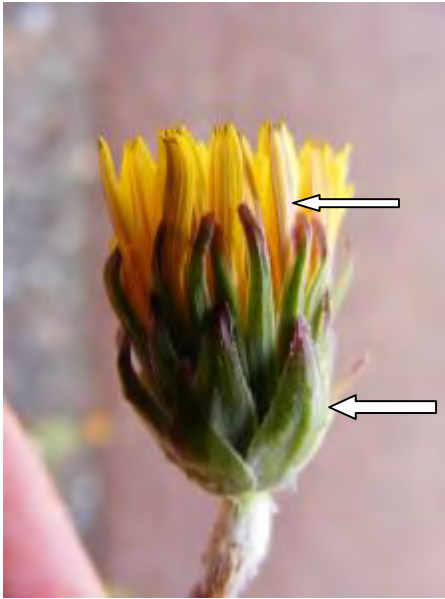
Taraxacum ostenfeldii



Plant Crib 3

3b. Exterior bracts erect; ligule stripes tenuous, streaky, red

Taraxacum unguilobum



2b. Stigmas discoloured when dry; darker than ligules when fresh (4a-4b)



4a. Ligules usually short, scarcely exceeding inner bracts, with a solid purple-brown stripe below; exterior bracts erect, pruinose, lacking a border; distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes usually concave-angled (5a-5b)

Plant Crib 3

5a. Exterior bracts erect-patent; lateral leaf-lobes linear distally; achene body <3.4 mm (scarce)

Taraxacum landmarkii



5b. Exterior bracts erect (-appressed); lateral leaf lobes various; achene body >3.3 mm (widespread)

Taraxacum nordstedtii



Plant Crib 3

4b Ligules striped grey to violet, not purple-brown (6a-6b)

6a Exterior bracts \pm equalling interior bracts in bud; leaves \pm lacerate, leaf-lobes linear, dentate

Taraxacum fulvicarpum



Taraxacum fulvicarpum

6b Exterior bracts much shorter than interior bracts in late bud; leaf-lobes not lacerate-dentate (7a-7b)

7a Exterior bracts erect-appressed, > 3.6 mm wide, clearly white-bordered

Taraxacum lancastricense (not illustrated)

7b Exterior bracts spreading-recurved, <3.5 mm wide, unbordered or scarcely so (8a-8b)

8a Terminal leaf-lobes trilobate; some leaf-lobes usually forward-pointing

Taraxacum celticum (not illustrated)

Plant Crib 3

9b Ligules striped darker below (10a-10b)

10a Interlobes heavily tar-blotched at least below in the fresh and dry state (11a-11b)

11a Terminal leaf-lobes large, rounded; exterior bracts patent to erect

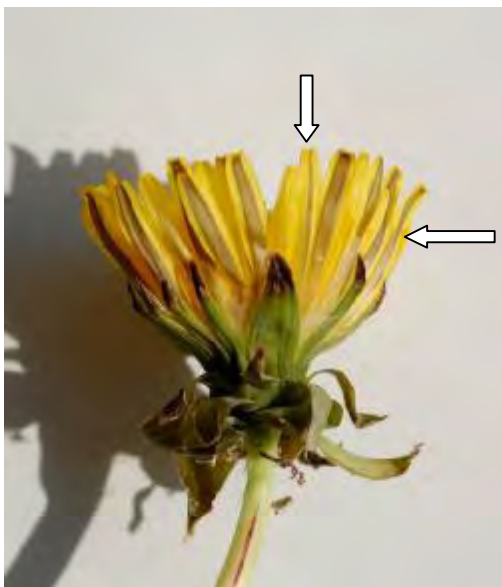
Taraxacum fulgidum (not illustrated)

11b Terminal leaf-lobes trilobate to obtuse-triangular; exterior bracts recurved (12a-12c)

12a Ligules striped purple, ligule teeth purple; robust plants of western Britain with 4-6 lateral leaflobes, interlobes distinct, parallel-sided *Taraxacum hesperium* (not illustrated)

12b Ligules striped purple, ligule teeth yellow; small plants of southern water-meadows with 2-3 lateral leaf-lobes, long interlobes and long narrow purple petioles *Taraxacum tamesense* (not illustrated)

12c Ligules striped grey-violet, ligule teeth yellow; interlobes short, acute *Taraxacum excellens*



Taraxacum excellens



10b Interlobe tar blotches absent, or only evident on dried material (13a-13g)

13a Exterior bracts erect to appressed, pruinose, without of border; ligules scarcely exceeding inner bracts, striped brown-purple below *Taraxacum nordstedtii* (see lead 5b above)

Plant Crib 3

13b Exterior bracts erect to appressed, blackish below (outside); achenes spineless

Taraxacum britannicum



13c Terminal leaf-lobes with an extenuate acuminate apex (14a-14b)

14a Distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes angled-concave; petioles brilliant purple

Taraxacum haematicum (not illustrated)

14b Distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes \pm straight; petioles dull greenish-purple

Taraxacum porteri



Taraxacum porteri



Plant Crib 3

13d Lateral leaf-lobes mostly >5 per side; exterior bracts patent, valvate *Taraxacum subbracteatum*



Taraxacum subbracteatum

13e Terminal lobes of inner leaves larger than other lobes, ± rounded; ligule stripe purple *Taraxacum bracteatum*



Taraxacum bracteatum

Plant Crib 3

13f Ligule teeth blackish; stigmas rather dark when fresh, drying blackish *Taraxacum duplidentifrons*



13g Ligule stripe grey-pink, ligule teeth yellow; stigmas yellowish when fresh, drying discoloured. Leaf lobes 3-5; exterior bracts suberect, pruinose; terminal leaf-lobe rather broad, obtuse

Taraxacum gelertii *Taraxacum cambricum*

These species cannot be reliably separated without achenes which are much longer (body ca. 4.0 mm) and spineless in *T. cambricum* (3.2 and spiny above in *T. gelertii*). The terminal lobe of *T. gelertii* is usually subdivided with a 'high tooth', and the leaves of this species are darker and bluer than in *T. cambricum* but these distinctions are not always reliable). *Taraxacum cambricum* is not illustrated here.



Taraxacum gelertii

Plant Crib 3

References Dudman, A. & Richards, A. J. (1997). *Dandelions of Great Britain and Ireland*.
Botanical Society of the British Isles, London.

Author A. J. Richards 2012
Pictures A. J. Richards, P. A. Smith and T. C. G. Rich