



## **TRAGOPOGON PRATENSIS**

Three subspecies of *T. pratensis* L. have been reported from the British Isles but they are rarely recorded. Subsp. *minor* (Mill.) Wahlenb. is widespread, subsp. *pratensis* is uncommon, and subsp. *orientalis* (L.) Celak. is a rare casual.

Observations should be made on sunny mornings when the flowering heads of all the taxa are open and the fruiting heads are closed (Barling 1955). It is important to look at the freshly-opened flowers because, after fertilisation, the ovary development is rapid so that the tips of the outer florets may be lifted above the involucre, even though the central florets may be undeveloped (such partially-fertilised heads are recognisable by their florets of variable length). Fertilised florets soon show a browning with orange tingeing of the corolla and browning of the anthers and stigmas. When all the florets are fertilised the heads remain closed.

The Table below has been compiled from *Flora Europaea* 4 (1976) and Barling (1955). Characters not included are anther colour (Barling 1955 gives notes on variation in subsp. *minor*) and the scale type of the achenes.

	Subsp. <i>minor</i>	Subsp. <i>pratensis</i>	Subsp. <i>orientalis</i>
Involucral bracts	About twice as long as ligules, margin often reddish	Shorter than or equalling ligules, margin pale or white	Shorter than or equalling ligules, margin pale or white
Ligule florets	Pale yellow	Pale yellow	Golden yellow
Achenes (note 1)	10-12 mm, beak about as long as body	15-20 mm, beak about as long as body	'Large', beak usually shorter than body

### **Note**

1. Length presumed not to include beak

**Reference** Barling, D. M. (1955). *Watsonia* 3: 210-212.