



Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

669 wild or naturalised plant species recorded in bloom during New Year Plant Hunt 2022

The results are in for BSBI's eleventh New Year Plant Hunt, when plant-lovers across Britain and Ireland head out to see what is flowering in their local patch. 1,895 people took part this year – more than ever before – during this warmest New Year on record. Plant Hunters were out recording wild and naturalised plants in bloom in their local area for up to three hours over the New Year period¹ - here's what they found:

- 669 different plant species were recorded in bloom across Britain and Ireland compared to 710 last year and 615 in 2020.
- A total of 20,612 records were submitted: slightly down on last year's total of 21,419.
- 1,256 lists were submitted, an increase of 6% compared to 1,195 last year and 798 in 2020.
- 1,895 people² participated, either individually or as part of small family groups and a few organised group Hunts, although there were far fewer group Hunts than pre-pandemic.
- Plant hunters joined in from Orkney to Guernsey, from Anglesey to Norfolk, and from Donegal to south west Cork.

As expected, the milder south and the coastal areas of Britain and Ireland had the highest numbers of species in flower³ – 107 in Swanage with more than 80 species also recorded at locations in Somerset, Cornwall, Jersey and Suffolk.

Although the 2022 New Year period itself was the warmest on record, temperatures leading up to the New Year Plant Hunt were only 1.1 degrees above average. This contrasts with temperatures leading up to the 2021 Hunt, when temperatures were 2.7 degrees above average and a higher number of species in bloom (710) was recorded⁴.

Julia Hanmer, BSBI's Chief Executive said "Citizen science projects such as the New Year Plant Hunt are essential to help us understand how our wild plants are responding to climate change. We are very grateful to everyone who went out plant hunting over the New Year period – their contributions further our understanding of the pressures that plants face, and encourage many others to become passionate about our wild plants."

Andrew Rowley of BSBI's Events & Communications Committee⁵ has analysed this year's results⁶ and compared them with those from previous years. He said "2022 has been a record-breaking year, with more participants and more lists submitted than ever before, but we are still seeing the same split of native vs non-native plants".

The main findings from this year's data were:

- 53% of the flowering species reported were of plants which normally flower after midsummer and had managed to carry on flowering. These include 'Autumn Stragglers' such as Yarrow, Ragwort and Hogweed. This proportion is very similar to previous years.
- Only 25% were 'Springtime Specialists' like Primrose and Lesser Celandine, so there is no indication of an early spring. This proportion is similar to previous years.
- 22% of the records submitted were of species we might reasonably expect to flower at New Year, or species which we cannot easily be categorised as either 'early' or 'late'. These include typical 'All Year Rounders' such as Shepherd's-purse as well as 'Winter Specialists' such as Winter Heliotrope.
- The top four most frequently seen species were Daisy, Groundsel, Dandelion and Annual Meadow-grass – this was identical to last year's list and all (native) plants that we would expect to be flowering at this time of year.
- White dead-nettle moved into fifth position on the Top Twenty list of most frequent plants, replacing Smooth Sow-thistle which moved to number nine on the list.
- Gorse re-entered the Top Twenty replacing Yarrow, which dropped to number 15 on the list.
- 38% of species recorded were non-natives (aliens). This includes plants from warmer climates that have escaped from gardens or cultivation, become naturalised⁶ in the wild and were able to extend their flowering into the winter months.

As in previous years, urban areas tended to have more non-native species in flower than rural areas, as there are more sheltered and disturbed places with warm microclimates where alien plants can thrive.

Kevin Walker, BSBI Head of Science⁸ said "As Andrew's analysis of the New Year Plant Hunt data shows, our plants are responding to changing weather patterns, with more flowers being recorded during the past decade as we experience autumns and winters with warmer temperatures and fewer frosts. We cannot, however, prove conclusively that more species are flowering nowadays in mid-winter compared to in past years. We can't say for sure yet what impacts these changes in flowering times will have on associated wildlife - but we can see that weather patterns are changing and our plants, both native and non-native, are responding."

Daily highlights of people's Hunts across Britain and Ireland were posted on the BSBI News & Views blog⁹ and shared via social media¹⁰.

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The Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) is the leading society promoting the study, understanding and enjoyment of wild plants in Britain and Ireland. Founded in 1836, we are now one of the world's largest contributors of biological records, many collected by our volunteer members, both amateur and professional botanists, who benefit from our research, training and outreach programmes.

Notes:

1. The 2022 New Year Plant Hunt ran from Saturday 1st to Tuesday 4th January: www.bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt

2. 1,895 people registered their participation via our online recording app: nyph.bsbi.org and using these instructions: nyph.bsbi.org/take-part/
3. The New Year Plant Hunt website has an interactive map showing where plants were recorded; zoom in and click on the markers to view individual lists: nyph.bsbi.org/results.php
4. The 2021 NYPH analysis is available here: <https://bsbi.org/download/23913/>
5. Andrew Rowley is a BSBI volunteer member who sits on the [BSBI's Events & Communications committee](#).
6. Download the 2022 NYPH analysis in full: <https://bsbi.org/download/30389/>
7. An explanation of terms such as 'wild', 'native', 'naturalised' and 'aliens' is available here: <https://bsbi.org/definitions-wild-native-or-alien>
8. Dr Kevin Walker is Head of Science at the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland: <https://bsbi.org/research>. Kevin is available for interview (phone or Zoom) on Monday 21st February.
Email Kevin for comment or to arrange an interview: kevin.walker@bsbi.org
9. For New Year Plant Hunt 2022 daily summaries, please follow these links:
[Day One](#); [Day Two](#); [Day Three](#) & [Day Four](#).
10. See images and comments on Twitter: [#NewYearPlantHunt](https://twitter.com/NewYearPlantHunt)