

Warwickshire Flora Group

Newsletter No. 13 March 2017.

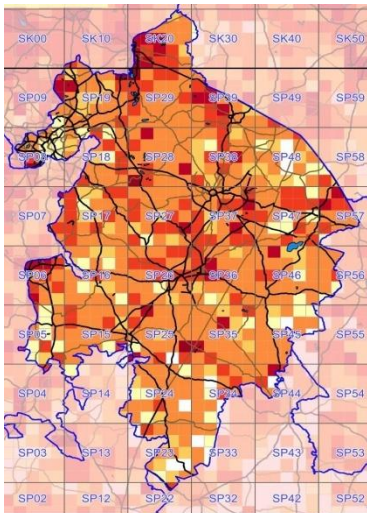
FIELD MEETINGS

Although an astonishing 23,000 records were sent in to the BSBI database last year there are still many parts of our county that have not been well surveyed. With only a few seasons of recording left until the end of the BSBI Atlas 2020 project, this year's field meetings have been tailored to fill up some of these gaps.

Spring highlights include:

- some extreme urban botany in East Birmingham and the Coventry Canal Basin
- high quality woodland in Alcester and Kenilworth
- a repeat visit in June to Fossedene Manor to see the orchids
- an opportunity to visit a plant nursery near Stratford-upon-Avon

Plans for the autumn include an out-of- county trip to the Cotswolds led by Brian Laney, a chance to visit Morton Morrell Agricultural College and a trip to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



John Roberts, Val Roberts, Glyn Clarke, Anna Dudley, Jackie Hardy, Nick Law, David Long, Mary Taylor, Graham Thompson, Russ Tonks, and Linda Trost have all offered to survey tetrads in 2017.

If you would like to help, chose a tetrad from the map on the left (the tetrads that need doing are in the lighter colours). Just contact us, and we will let you know what you have to do.

Please send plant records to johnwalton46@tiscali.co.uk or ring John and Monika on 01827 712455

ANNUAL INDOOR MEETING

As last year's spring meeting was poorly attended, we have decided to hold our Annual Indoor Meeting in the autumn, in either September or October. This should coincide with the publication of the Warwickshire Rare Plant Register.

BSBI NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT

Twelve Flora Group members braved the black ice and sub-zero temperatures for a walk around Rugby on January 2nd. A varied route, through town centre car parks, back alleys and a scrap metal yard produced a total of 155 species of which 26 were seen in flower. We will be walking the route again later this year as one of the autumn field meetings

Warwickshire Botanist Michael Senior dies aged 73.



Even if you have been involved in Warwickshire botany for many years, you may well have never met Michael as he tended to keep himself very much to himself. We were fortunate to be invited to join his small group of “oldies” (Maurice Arnold, Neville and Jane O’Dell) on field trips which were planned meticulously to look for rarities that he had discovered many years before. Michael was a bit of a “plant twitcher”. He didn’t contribute many records (at that time sent in on pink slips and posted to Warwick Museum rather than sent by e mail), but he had an eye for good habitat and added many rare plants and hybrids to the county list. His fine botanical skill led him to find the only modern records for *Carex elata*, *Calamagrostis canescens*, *Jasione montana*, *Nepeta cataria*, *Platanthera bifolia*, *Ribes alpinum*, *Vicia lathyroides* and *Vicia lutea*. Michael had no close relatives and little is known about his working life. He had an admirable disregard for the law of trespass and just a few years ago produced a record for Sweet Cecily a mile along the railway line north of Bedworth station! His boyish enthusiasm will be missed.



Malva verticillata. Photo by J. Roberts



Petasites japonicus. Photo by J. Walton

NEW AND INTERESTING RECORDS

On the BSBI New Year Plant Hunt in January, David Long showed us an interesting species of *Malva* growing in pavement cracks near Rugby Town Centre. A specimen was collected, but as the plant had no mature fruits it couldn’t be named. In February fruits were collected and photos and a description were sent to referee Quentin Groom. He then sent them to a *Malva* expert in Belgium who identified the plant as ***M. verticillata* (Chinese Mallow)**, only the third GB record since the year 2000. See photo on the left.

Quentin runs a website www.alienplantsbelgium.be that is full of information, photos and keys that are just as useful for British plants. Don’t worry, it is in English.

The first county record of a seedling of ***Chamaecyparis pisifera* (Sawara Cypress)** was found by John and Monika Walton in Kingshurst on 13 February, and a few plants of ***Cyclamen coum* (Eastern Sowbread)** were spotted at Eaves Green by Mary Taylor on 17 March, another new find for the vice-county.

Whist walking near Marston on 5 March, near Kingsbury John Walton discovered a new colony of ***Petasites japonicus* (Giant Butterbur)** growing in a ditch. Returning for a photo two days later, he met the landowner who said that the colony used to cover nearly half of his field and that he had been trying to eradicate the plant by mowing for the last 40 years.