

Field Botany in Renfrewshire

Newsletter - Summer 2022

Progress

It's a remarkable fact that, of the **780** 1km map squares that form the vice-county of Renfrewshire, some **248** (over 31%) have seen plant recording activity since our network was formed a little over a year ago.



A spectacular display of *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower) in a meadow at Shutterflat, west of Uplawmoor

Records have been contributed by many people, both on our programmed field outings and through individual recording efforts, and thanks are due to everyone involved.

Some of this activity has been quite intensive: **95** locations have had over 100 species recorded, and the current record is held by urban **Pollok** (NS5362) with **252** species seen since autumn 2021.

The programme for the remainder of this year is being circulated with this Newsletter. One highlight will be a visit to hill country above the Muirshiel Country Park near Lochwinnoch on 10th July, to be led by our vice-county Recorder, Keith Watson. This will require some physical effort, but promises to be a day with big rewards, featuring some less common moorland species.

Remember you can always refer to past issues of our newsletter and the current programme by visiting the Renfrewshire page on the BSBI website:

<https://bsbi.org/renfrewshire>

(If we should ever lose touch, this would also be an easy way for you to find us again.)

Recent finds



Menyanthes trifoliata (Bogbean)



Chrysosplenium alternifolium (Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage)



A close look at the fascinating flowers of *Raphanus raphanistrum* (Wild Radish)

Training (you can help)

Requests are increasingly coming in from Parks, Schools, Community Woodlands, Urban Conservation Projects and Visitor Centres for someone to come and provide beginner-level botany experiences.

Many readers of this Newsletter have more than enough capability to be involved in this, whether alone or with others. The training and mentorship chain extends in both directions, and we should all remember that, as well as seeking input for our own development, we should take opportunities to offer it in turn to others. At a time when public concern for the natural world is growing rapidly, there is a real need for some basic input for beginner botanists.

Please get in touch if you'd like to help in this - the more of us who pass on our enthusiasm for botany to others, the more people will start to get interested.

Special Workshop

This summer we will be hosting a brand new event here in Renfrewshire. For several years, in various locations in western Scotland, Angus Hannah has been running an annual weekend workshop for some die-hards interested in learning the specialist skill of identifying different Bramble species.



Rubus dumnoniensis (Western Bramble)



Rubus leptothyrsos (Hairy-anthered Bramble)

This year he is offering an additional one-day, beginner-level workshop to give people an insight into what is regarded as a daunting corner of field botany. To be held in Lochwinnoch on Saturday 9th July, this **'Introduction to Bramble Identification'** is a unique opportunity for beginners to learn some of the characters which enable different Bramble microspecies to be pinned down. Please give it a go: whatever your level, you will acquire skills that are the envy of many lifelong botanists! (full details in the programme)

PS Did you know that 'batology' is the study of Brambles? (not the study of bats!)

Invaders

Peter Wiggins writes:

“We were finishing the day after recording in Linwood and Brookfield and had a look at the new sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). We saw unfamiliar, small bulrushes - which unlike the larger ones hadn't gone over. Fortunately, several were near to the side and I measured the heads at less than 6cm in length, compared to 12–20cm of the normal, larger ones.

I had heard that a new Bulrush was being planted out, so sent the photographs to a referee who confirmed that this is *Typha laxmannii* (Slender Reed-mace): just the sixth record in the UK and the first in Scotland.



Typha laxmannii (Slender Reed-mace) - the walking pole is extended to 1.4m at the base of the nearest plant.

I contacted the builder but unfortunately the landscaping firm that carried out the planting is no longer in business. It will be interesting to see if this population spreads over time to nearby ponds.”

Jim Blackwood writes:

“This is American Skunk-cabbage, *Lysichiton americanus*, a first for me, located in Kilbarchan. I'd been given directions to find it. Such a handsome plant, but as we know, very invasive. This population is merrily spreading down the lade from a silted up old garden pond. My Fitter, Fitter & Blamey describes the flowers as having an “evil” smell! I think the flowers are still too young to be “evil”, but the leaves had a very distinctive marijuana-like (!!) smell, especially when crushed.

I believe the species is notifiable, and that this site has already been reported, but I'll report it again. I've no idea if there has been any attempt to eradicate it here.”



QUIZ ANSWERS

Here are the translations of the Three-Letter Acronyms in our recent quiz.

Partner organisations and initiatives:

- BRC** Biological Records Centre(s)
- BSS** Botanical Society of Scotland
- GPS** Global Positioning System
- LNR** Local Nature Reserve
- NBN** National Biodiversity Network
- NTS** National Trust for Scotland
- NVC** National Vegetation Classification
- SNH** Scottish Natural Heritage - now operating as NatureScot
- SWT** Scottish Wildlife Trust

BSBI jargon:

- AEM** Annual Exhibition Meeting (the BSBI's big annual get-together)
- DDb** Distribution Database
- RPR** Rare Plant Register
- SBC** Scottish Botanists' Conference (held annually in November - highly recommended!)
- UFP** Urban Flora Project (an initiative of the BSS)
- VCR** Vice-County Recorder

Plant abbreviations:

- BFT** Bird's-foot Trefoil
- RLS** Rue-leaved Saxifrage
- SVG** Sweet Vernal-grass

Our own jargon:

- WOB** 'Walk On By' - often uttered e.g. when someone asks what Willow that is . . . !
- WSG** Winter Study Groups
- PSW** Initials of our very own Peter Wiggins - as seen in his email address, and on his car registration plate

Information

Please join in our activities whenever you can. Some people may fear that recording plants will require expertise they don't possess: however the very opposite is true! It's fine just to tag along and be a 'silent' member of the party. You can watch, listen and ask lots of questions - how do you think everyone else acquired whatever knowledge they have?

Peter is the person to send plant lists to. These are welcome from anyone, anytime. Do get out and record plants on your own - if you'd like some guidance on the best way to do recording, please get in touch. Records can be in the form of scanned lists or Recording Cards, spreadsheets or Word documents - or even paper lists by post or photos of the scribbles in your notebook!

Photographs, especially views of the Renfrewshire landscape or stunning pictures of plants, are always welcome. Any (but not all!) photos you submit may appear in Newsletters, the webpage or other literature.

You are welcome to email Keith, Peter or Michael at any time. They are also willing to have a go at identifying plants from photographs if you get stuck!

And please visit the Renfrewshire page on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org/renfrewshire>

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Photo credits:

<i>Trollius europaeus</i>	Jim Blackwood, Shutterflat, 24th May 2022
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> (the County Flower of Renfrewshire)	Jim Blackwood, Shutterflat, 24th May 2022
<i>Chrysosplenium alternifolium</i>	Jim Blackwood, Kaim Burn, Lochwinnoch, 18th April 2022
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Pauline Wood, Neilston, 13th March 2022
<i>Rubus dumnoniensis</i>	Michael Philip, Greenock, 11th September 2021
<i>Rubus leptothyrsos</i>	Michael Philip, Barrhead, 18th August 2021
<i>Typha laxmannii</i>	Peter Wiggins, 5th May and 24th April 2022
<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>	Jim Blackwood, Kilbarchan, 29th April 2022

* Remember you're always welcome to send in photos, either for potential inclusion in the Newsletter or the webpage, or to request help in identifying a plant.