



September 2022 Sample Issue

See inside for a selection of articles from *BSBI News* no. 151 and details of how to join the BSBI. Members receive three issues of *BSBI News* each year as part of the package of membership benefits.

 Botanical Society
of Britain & Ireland



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Cover photo: Yellow Bird's-nest (*Hypopitys monotropa*) growing inside a discarded car tyre on a post-industrial site, Kirkintilloch, 29 July 2020 (Michael Philip). See article, p. 9.

Contributions for future issues should be sent to the Editor, John Norton (john.norton@bsbi.org)

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ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: Plant Alert – results from the first three years

Plant Alert – results from the first three years

KATHARINA DEHNEN-SCHMUTZ, JOSEF KUTLVAŠR & APRIL WEBB



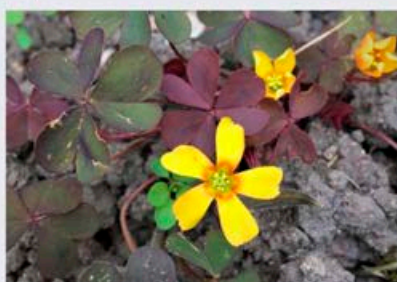
Launched in 2019, Plant Alert is now a well-established reporting tool collecting data from gardeners and the wider public on ornamental plants spreading in gardens. Hosted by the BSBI and integrated within the BSBI database it continues to receive records in line with the initial idea to have this as a permanent reporting tool (www.plantalert.org). While we have posted regular updates about the project in *BSBI News*, here we want to provide a first overview of the records we have received so far. A PhD student research exchange in February 2022 offered the opportunity for JK to spend time analysing the records we had received to this date. The main aim of this article is to provide some insight into how we want to use the data to identify potential future invasive species and to report some of the additional information we received for the reported species from participants in the project.

Species reported

By February 2022 we had received 579 records relating to 211 species, of which 36 are native, 11 archaeophytes and 164 neophytes. In our previous updates, we have mostly reported on the species which were reported most often, and these are also always displayed on the project's web page. These include some very familiar invaders, such as *Reynoutria japonica* (Japanese Knotweed) and *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam). However, as the main aim of the project is to gain evidence of potential future invasive plants, we are particularly interested in reports of plants that are not widespread and known as invasive in Britain and Ireland. We therefore checked for all plants if they have any records in the BSBI database, i.e. if they have been reported from outside gardens. This was not the case for nine species (Table 1), all of which were reported just once, with the exception of *Araujia*

sericifera (Cruel Plant), which was reported by two participants.

We then considered all records of plants which were more frequently reported, i.e. having five or more records and having a distribution of less than 1500 hectads, resulting in a list of 14 species (Table 2). For all of these species, we found evidence that they have naturalised in other countries where they are not native in the Global Database of



Oxalis corniculata (Procumbent Yellow-sorrel) has been frequently reported having entered participants' gardens accidentally in pots with other plants or with building materials or compost. Roger Horton

Table 1. Recorded taxa with no occurrences in the BSBI database 2000 onwards and the number of nurseries selling them

Species	Nurseries
<i>Anarrhinum bellidifolium</i>	0
<i>Araujia sericifera</i>	9
<i>Chrysosplenium davidianum</i>	8
<i>Baptisia australis</i>	61
<i>Campanula isophylla</i>	3
<i>Dipsacus asper</i>	1
<i>Phaenospema globosum</i>	11
<i>Salvia viscosa</i>	2
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	1

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: Plant Alert – results from the first three years

Table 2. The most frequent taxa (five or more Plant Alert records) with the least count of hectads (<1500) from the year 2000 onwards and the number of nurseries selling the species.

Taxa	Records	Hectads	Nurseries
<i>Leycesteria formosa</i>	22	1447	40
<i>Houttuynia cordata</i>	16	84	12
<i>Anemone × hybrida</i>	16	437	51
<i>Allium triquetrum</i>	13	1122	14
<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>	7	1056	102
<i>Fallopia baldschuanica</i>	7	1128	26
<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	7	1299	0
<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>	6	594	0
<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	6	695	113
<i>Soleirolia soleirolii</i>	6	1332	15
<i>Akebia quinata</i>	5	15	61
<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	5	451	5
<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i> subsp. <i>robbiae</i>	5	656	66
<i>Hypericum calycinum</i>	5	905	18

Naturalised Alien Flora (GloNAF) (<https://glo.nafl.org>; accessed February 2022). We also checked for these species the number of nurseries listed in the RHS plant finder (www.rhs.org.uk/plants; accessed February 2022) as a measure of popularity of these species.

The more popular a garden plant is in the trade, the more likely it is to be planted in a garden, providing opportunities for species to spread and being recorded outside gardens. The number of nurseries selling a species has previously been shown to explain the likelihood of ornamental plants to escape cultivation (Dehnen-Schmutz et al., 2007). Only two species are not on sale currently, *Lysichiton americanus* (American Skunk-cabbage) which is banned from sale as an invasive species, and *Oxalis corniculata* (Procumbent Yellow-sorrel), which is not considered an ornamental plant (spread mostly with nursery stock), *Rubus spectabilis* (Salmonberry), sold as a species by just five nurseries, is banned from being planted in the Republic of Ireland where it is known to prevent native tree regeneration in woodlands (Gioria et al., 2018) and scheduled in the Wildlife and Countryside Act for Northern Ireland, where it is therefore 'illegal to plant or otherwise grow in the wild', but not banned from sale. However, various double flowered 'flore pleno' cultivars are available from more than 30 nurseries. This species seems certainly also a candidate for a risk assessment

given the increasing number of records, continued popularity and evidence of the negative impacts in Ireland.

Akebia quinata is a well-known invasive species in North America, where it is controlled because of its high impacts in woodlands. In Britain, the species is currently undergoing a pest risk assessment by the GB Non-native Species Secretariat. For the rest of the species in our list (Tables 1 & 2) we would recommend narrowing down the list by a screening

Tropaeolum ciliatum received one record to date by Plant Alert and there is a single record in the BSBI database. Shirley Brittin



BEGINNER'S CORNER: Getting to know the common thistles

BEGINNER'S CORNER

Getting to know the common thistles

MIKE CREWE

The thistles are a group that seem to demand our attention. Often tall and stately, they flower for extended periods over summer and attract a great diversity of insects to their flowers, including some of our most attractive butterflies. They also impose themselves on us with their needle-like spines, which most certainly demand attention! Quite a range of plants find themselves with 'thistle' in their name – globe-thistles, sow-thistles, star-thistles – most of which are not particularly closely related to the true thistles, but which are spiny, nevertheless.

This article looks at the commoner species of true thistle, in the genera *Cirsium* and *Carduus*, which gives us a manageable eight species to consider. These are typically upright plants with a basal rosette of spiny leaves giving rise to densely spiny (and often downy/woolly) stems and rich, reddish-purple flowers carried in a cluster at the tips of the main stem or its side branches. Apart from Creeping Thistle and Stemless Thistle, which are perennials, all are usually biennial, with the basal leaves produced in the first year and the flowering stems in the second. Most thistles can grow to 1–2 metres in height with the exception of Stemless Thistle, which actually has very short stems, barely as long as its flowerheads. The flowers are followed

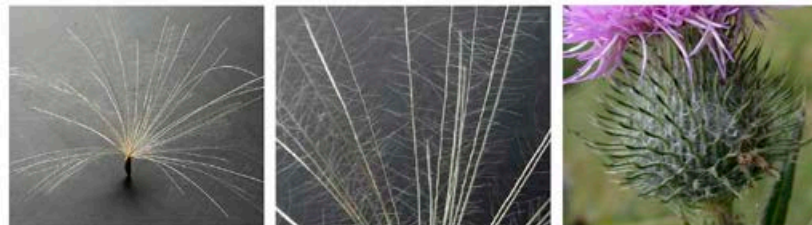
by seeds that have a feathery 'parachute' for wind dispersal called a pappus and which drift across the landscape in late summer.

Cirsium or *Carduus*?

The first port of call in the process of identifying a thistle is narrowing down the choice of which genus it is in. Two features can be used to determine this; in plants already bearing seeds, a close look at the pappus with a hand lens will reveal whether the silky hairs are simple or whether they are feathered, i.e. they have side branches along their length. Simple hairs indicate a *Carduus* species, while feathered hairs indicate a *Cirsium*. The second feature is more variable and thus less useful, but involves the phyllaries – the greenish or brownish bracts that surround the outside of the flowerhead in the thistle family. As a general rule of thumb, phyllaries that are pressed tightly against the flowerhead indicates *Cirsium*, but spiny, outward-spreading phyllaries could indicate either genus.

The character suite

While some characters will be found in more than one species, a suite of characters can be unique to a species and this helps us to identify thistles. For each



Left to right: a typical thistle pappus; the feathery pappus of Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*); the spiny phyllaries of Spear Thistle (*C. vulgare*). Photographs by the author.

BEGINNER'S CORNER: Getting to know the common thistles

species, it pays to look at details of the leaves, stem, and the phyllaries of the flowerheads, with the latter especially giving good clues to the identification. You will find that, while some characters are shared, the combination of these features is different for each species and will provide you with an identification.

Here, we'll go through each species in turn and look at these features. Note that Woolly and Stemless Thistles are absent from Ireland.

Mike Crewe
mikedcrewe@gmail.com



Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Widespread and common throughout Britain and Ireland. The bane of farmers and gardeners; a perennial with far-reaching, creeping roots and thus differing from other thistles by forming persistent colonies of stems with no basal leaf rosettes. Stem leaves greyish-green with undulating margins. Stems smooth and spineless. Phyllaries pressed against the flowerhead with just the pointed tips curving outward.



Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*). lanceolate segments in the upper part singly or up to



Stemless Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*). Widespread south and east of a line from the Humber to the Severn, but largely absent from Devon and Cornwall and low-lying, alluvial areas such as the Fens, Norfolk Broadland and the Thames Basin. Forms small clusters of basal leaf rosettes in chalk and limestone grassland. Leaves with swept-back segments, rather like a spiny dandelion. May produce short, spineless stems in longer grassland. Phyllaries pressed against the flowerhead. Flowerheads slender, reddish-purple, carried singly.



Woolly Thistle (*Cirsium eriophorum*). A plant of chalky soils, having its best populations in the Yorkshire Wolds, southward from the eastern Peak District to Cambridgeshire and from the West Midlands south through the Cotswolds to Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight. The 'Queen of Thistles', forming a magnificently stately plant. Leaves ladder-like, with long, narrow segments, whitish underneath and tipped with long, needle-like spines. Stems thickly covered in cobweb-like hairs. Phyllaries spreading, with down-curved, spiny tips hidden amongst dense cobwebbing. Flowerheads single, large, reddish-purple, often nodding under their own weight.

BSBI News reports on the latest plant finds from across Britain & Ireland: from new county records of native species to recent discoveries of escaped and naturalised plants.



Thlaspi alliaceum L.
(Garlic Penny-cress)
in Combe Valley
Countryside Park (v.c. 14)

MATTHEW BERRY

Thlaspi alliaceum, Combe Valley Countryside Park, East Sussex (v.c. 14). Judith Linsell

On 13 April 2022, while exploring Combe Valley Countryside Park to the north of Bexhill-on-Sea, Judith Linsell and the author came across two close-set colonies of a white-flowered cruciferous plant on the lower bank of the Combe Valley Greenway (TQ 7609 1058). Some plants were small (c. 20 cm tall) and very few-flowered, others had greatly elongated racemes and stood between 60–70 cm tall. The fruits were narrowly winged, slightly notched siliculae, 6–9 mm long. Most of the plants only had flowers remaining at the tops of their inflorescences and these are what had caught my eye as we walked the footpath above the bank. The narrow, fleshy, toothed, clasping stem leaves reminded me of *Thlaspi arvense* (Field Penny-cress) and when I crushed one it released a distinctly garlicky odour. The strong suspicion began to form in my mind that the plants were *Thlaspi alliaceum* (Garlic Penny-cress) and this hardened into a virtual certainty when I keyed out specimens at home. Pressed material was later confirmed as this species by Eric Clement. We did not carry out systematic counts so can only give a broad estimate of 20–50 plants for the larger colony. The main associates were perfectly ordinary and included such species as *Ranunculus acris*

(Meadow Buttercup), *R. repens* (Creeping Buttercup), *Vicia sativa* subsp. *segetalis* (Common Vetch), *Ervilia hirsuta* (Hairy Tare), *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *Geranium dissectum* (Cut-leaved Crane's-bill), *Galium aparine* (Cleavers), *Cirsium arvense* (Creeping Thistle), *Centaurea nigra* s.l. (Common Knapweed), *Sonchus asper* (Prickly Sowthistle), *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), *Anthriscus sylvestris* (Cow Parsley), *Festuca rubra* agg. (Red Fescue), *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's-foot), *Holcus lanatus* (Yorkshire-fog), *Alopecurus pratensis* (Meadow Foxtail) and *Bromus hordeaceus* subsp. *hordeaceus* (Soft Brome). The only other possible 'exotic' was one very immature plant of a leguminous species, identified vegetatively as *Medicago sativa* (Lucerne).

On a subsequent visit (11/5/2022) we found many more plants of *T. alliaceum* (probably hundreds) along a c. 50 m stretch of the upper bank on the opposite side of the Greenway, around TQ 7608 1063, with rather similar associates, but additionally *Urtica dioica* (Common Nettle), *Sinapis arvensis* (Charlock) and *Conium maculatum* (Hemlock).

Thlaspi alliaceum is an annual crucifer native to central and south-eastern Europe and northern Turkey. It has been known in the Hothfield/Ripper's Cross area of v.c. 15 since 1923 and in the Maldon/

COUNTRY ROUNDUPS: Ireland



Vaccinium oxycoccos (Cranberry).
Graham Day



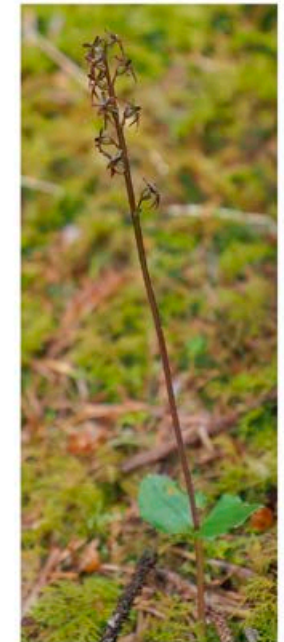
Campanula trachelium (Nettle-leaved Bellflower). Lisa Dolan

(H12) Paula O'Meara re-found *Orobancha rapum-genistae* (Greater Broomrape) on the margin of Killoughrum Forest where it once occurred in large numbers and was last reported in 1917 by Charles Moffat. Still in Co. Wexford I found *Trifolium suffocatum* (Suffocated Clover) at Ferrycarrig Castle, a new clover for Ireland.

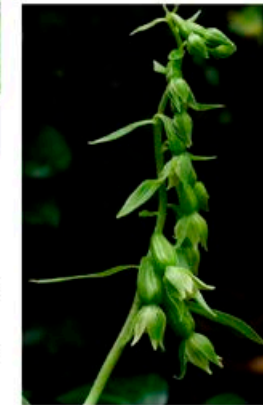
Two of the best finds to report are by Ciarán Byrne of *Epipactis phyllanthos* (Green-flowered Helleborine) from an

oak-ash-hazel wood at Dunsany, Co. Meath (H22), and Andrew Malcolm, who found five plants from a wooded road verge at Villierstown, Co. Waterford (H6); it is a new orchid for both counties. Ciarán also recorded *Atropa belladonna* (Deadly Nightshade) in the wood at Dunsany, another new species for Co. Meath. Andrew has been busy updating sites of rare species on the Waterford side of the Knockmealdown Mountains, including *Neottia cordata* (Lesser Twayblade), where he counted over 400 flowering plants under the conifers.

And finally, it can sometimes be fun doing the research to see when a plant was first reported from a county. As I was driving through Co. Laois (H14) near Stradbally I noticed a patch of *Senecio sarracenicus* (Broad-leaved Ragwort) on the top of a roadside bank. The DDb (BSBI database) implied it was a new county record. Both *A Catalogue of Alien Plants in*



Neottia cordata (Lesser Twayblade). Andrew Malcolm



Epipactis phyllanthos (Green-flowered Helleborine).
Andrew Malcolm

Ireland (Reynolds, 2002) and *Census Catalogue of the Flora of Ireland* (Scannell & Synnott, 1987) listed it as occurring in Co. Laois. Sylvia Reynolds came to my rescue and dug out the information, and to our surprise it was found by Thomas Chandless in two places near Stradbally, mentioned in *Cybele Hibernica* (Moore & More, 1866). It is expected that publications since *Cybele Hibernica* carried the record forward, but authors hadn't actually seen Broad-leaved Ragwort growing in the county. Is my record the first Co Laois record since 1866?

Paul Green
BSBI Ireland Officer

Other regular sections include book reviews; news and announcements from BSBI; and a round-up of plant records from across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

NOTICES

NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR A BSBI AWARD

We know that there are many people who do tremendous unpaid work for the Society and so we are launching two new Awards to recognise those who have made a significant contribution to the Society.

partnership with Princeton University Press. Members will be able to pre-order copies with a 50% discount from January 2023 – look out for a flyer inside the next issue of BSBI News.

We will also be launching the first online Plant Atlas, a website with all the Atlas species data

PRESIDENTS' AWARD WINNER



are going to have to limit numbers, so if you have missed being able to meet up with friends and fellow botanists over the past two years, book early!

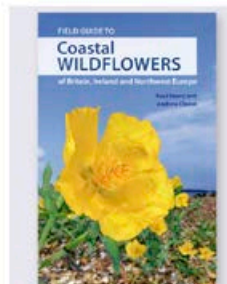
Jim McIntosh
BSBI Scotland Officer
jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org

BRITISH AND IRISH BOTANICAL CONFERENCE 2022: 'A FESTIVAL OF PLANTS'

We are delighted to invite you to our face-to-face conference at the Natural History Museum, London, on 19 November 2022. The event formerly known as the BSBI Exhibition Meeting is back and we have some exciting talks lined up for you. Find out more in the flyer (inside this issue of BSBI News) which sets out the draft programme for the day and explains how to book, whether you wish

This year's Presidents' Award has gone to John Richards for his *Field Handbook to British and*

REVIEWS



Field Guide to Coastal Wildflowers of Britain, Ireland and Northwest Europe

Paul Sterry & Andrew Cleave
Princeton University Press,
Princeton & Oxford, 2022; pp. 352,
with over 1500 coloured photos;
pbk £20.00. ISBN 9780691238456

From the briefest flick through, this field guide is obviously a quality production and stands out from the crowd. The layout is very pleasing and clear, the photographs are excellent, very

as some of the maps are very misleading. For example, *Lathyrus aphaca* is depicted as widespread in Cornwall whereas, in reality, only one plant has been found in the last 30 years. Nevertheless, thumbnails are a good idea and mostly helpful. Some plants also have a panel showing a similar species. More use could have been made of this feature for plants that people frequently mistake, such as *Trifolium dubium* for *Medicago lupulina*, or to alert the reader to plants not otherwise covered, such as *Reseda luteola*. Over 600, predominantly native, species are included, although I totted up 30 missing coastal plants with little difficulty.

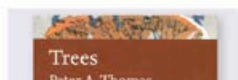
There are some very pleasing features such as a helpful photographic index on the inside flaps; a really nice map showing the British distribution of *Limonium binervosum* agg. group members, and a lovely explanation of the *Spartina anglica* story.

The nomenclature follows Stece ed. 4 (2019), apart from

as restricted to the drier, upper reaches of saltmarshes whilst the photograph shows it growing on top of a sea wall.

Clearly a huge amount of time and effort has gone into producing this book, but proof reading by a very experienced field botanist would have been helpful in order to tighten up the descriptive text and iron out the niggly little things, such as describing *Malva neglecta* as upright or *Lysimachia vulgaris* as similar to *Lysimachia arvensis*. Nevertheless, for budding botanists visiting the coast, I would recommend carrying Francis Rose's *The Wild Flower Key* in one pocket and this book in another. Use the keys and descriptive text in Rose in conjunction with the photographs in this field guide and you have the perfect combination!

Colin French



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- A membership welcome pack which includes the three most recent issues of BSBI News, the BSBI Yearbook, BSBI Code of Conduct, our booklet 'So You Want to Know Your Plants' and a BSBI bookmark.
- Your password for the members-only area of the BSBI website where you can access all the scientific papers published in *New Journal of Botany* 2011–2017, hear about exciting volunteering opportunities for BSBI members... and much, much more.

