



April 2023 Sample Issue

See inside for a selection of articles from *BSBI News* no. 153 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: An abundance of *Scilla autumnalis* (Autumn Squill) flowering on stabilised sand dune grassland, St Helen's Duver, Isle of Wight (v.c. 10), Colin Pope. See 'Introducing My Vice-county', p. 38.

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

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Myosotis stricta Link ex Roem. & Schult. (Upright Forget-me-not) new for Britain and Ireland

Myosotis stricta Link ex Roem. & Schult. (Upright Forget-me-not) new for Britain and Ireland

ANDY JONES, FRED RUMSEY & NEIL FORBES

Following the short note on early 20th century specimens of *Myosotis stricta* discovered in the BM herbarium (Jones & Rumsey, 2019), one of us (NF) made a repeated search of Sand-scale Haws NNR, from where the first specimen was found, and finally identified a likely candidate (confirmed by FJR) in May 2019. This proved to be part of a very small population of 10–15 plants, confined to a narrow, species-rich habitat. We have subsequently searched this large area and found only two other sub-sites, bringing the Sand-scale population to fewer than 30 plants. *M. stricta* has not since been found in surveys of other dune sites in west Wales (AJ), south-west, north-west and north-east England (AJ, Phill Brown, FJR), including neighbouring Walney Island. This suggests a very rare and potentially vulnerable plant, but it could still be easily overlooked in extensive areas of apparently suitable habitat elsewhere.

Readers should look for a small 0.5–5.0 (–12.0) cm high plant, with a distinctive grey, hoary appearance (caused by the numerous, almost microscopically hooked hairs on the stems and leaf undersides) and very upright inflorescence and capsules. The inflorescence axis has some conspicuous patent hairs and the capsules, which are a little larger than those of *M. ramosissima*, are almost sessile. The preferred habitat at Sand-scale appears to be sunny south-facing areas of decalcified fixed dunes, with numerous associates, including *Vulpia fasciculata* (Dune Fescue), *Euphorbia portlandica* (Portland Spurge), and especially *Syntrichia ruraliformis* (Sand-hill Screw-moss). At Sand-scale it is very rare compared to the relatively abundant *M. ramosissima*, but searching amongst populations of *M. ramosissima* is perhaps a good way to discover further populations of *M. stricta* in Britain and Ireland – if they exist. Further details will appear soon in *British & Irish Botany* but we refer



Myosotis stricta (Upright Forget-me-not), May 2021. Phill Brown

readers to the earlier published notes and illustration (Jones & Rumsey, 2019).

References

Jones, R.A. & Rumsey, F.[J.] 2019. *Myosotis stricta*: a likely native and overlooked forget-me-not in Britain. *BSBI News* 141: 8–9.

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Changing ideas of Changing Forget-me-not and evidence for *Myosotis dubia*

ANDY JONES

Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis* spp.) are easy to recognise as a group, but less so as species. '*M. arvensis*, *ramosissima* and *sylvatica* run into one another' (Sell & Murrell, 2009) and so too do *M. laxa*, *secunda* and *scorpioides* to the extent that, even relatively recently (e.g. Bentham & Hooker, 1945), field guides could describe them as one single species. Of the other commonly-encountered forget-me-nots, *M. discolor* can sometimes only be separated from *M. ramosissima* on small pollen differences (Chater pers. comm. in Sell & Murrell, 2009) – although this must be a relatively rare occurrence (e.g. with dried-up or damaged specimens). In general, *M. discolor* is one of the more distinctive species, with yellow or cream-coloured flowers that turn blue with age (hence its common name Changing Forget-me-not).

For all this, there do seem to be differences within *M. discolor* s.l., apart from the presence of yellow or cream-coloured flowers. These are not mentioned or illustrated in many field guides and references, e.g. Clapham, Tutin & Warburg (1952), Ross-Craig (1965); Rose (2006); Poland & Clement (2020), etc., but various authors have recognised two distinct variants with differing flower colour, corolla width and cauline leaves (Clapham, Tutin & Moore, 1987; Sell & Murrell, 2009), and also habitat (Silverside, 1998), called 'subsp. *discolor* Pers.' and 'subsp. *dubia* (Arrond.) Blaise' (Table 1).

Unfortunately, however, these differences are not always present in all individuals and populations of *M. discolor* s.l. The habitat is by no means definitive (Chater, 2010); some yellow-flowered plants lack



Figure 1. '*Myosotis discolor* subsp. *discolor*' (left) and '*M. discolor* subsp. *dubia*' (right) in cultivation, before subsp. *dubia* has reached its full height, 4 April (3-inch pot for scale). Andy Jones

Table 1. Main differences of *Myosotis discolor* subspecies, as described in field guides

	Flower colour	Corolla width	Cauline leaves	Habitat
<i>M. discolor</i> subsp. <i>discolor</i>	Corolla at first pale to golden yellow	Up to 4 mm	At least the upper pair opposite	Dry, sandy or peaty ground, etc.
<i>M. discolor</i> subsp. <i>dubia</i>	Corolla at first creamy-white	Less than 2 mm	All alternate	Damp, base-poor pastures, muddy tracks, etc.

Problems with identification in *Mentha*

BOB LEANEY

One of the most difficult problems regularly encountered during Norfolk Flora Group (NFG) surveys is the separation of *Mentha arvensis* (Corn Mint) from *M. × verticillata* (Whorled Mint). This has been the stimulus for the present account, but there are also frequent problems in distinguishing between *M. spicata* (Spearmint) and *M. × piperata*

and polyploidy further complicates the picture. Even *M. spicata*, although given specific status, is probably an old hybrid between *M. suaveolens* and *M. longifolia* and is just as variable as the recent hybrids.

The hybrids dealt with in the Key have the following parentage:
Mentha × verticillata (Whorled Mint): *M. arvensis*

Problems with identification in *Mentha*



Mentha suaveolens* vs *M. × villosa
Mentha suaveolens (left), Carcassonne, SW France. Note small stature, dark-green, shiny, strongly bullate, ovate to suborbicular leaves; conical terminal inflorescence with white flowers. Bob Leaney
Mentha × villosa (right), UK. Much taller, with mid grey-green, dull, slightly bullate and very hairy leaves; terminal inflorescence cylindrical, with flowers tiny and pink. Mike Crewe

Mentha arvensis* vs *M. × verticillata
Mentha arvensis (left) and *Mentha × verticillata* (right) from Hooks Well Meadows SSSI, W. Norfolk (v.c. 28). Both plants with no terminal inflorescence and very hairy. Similar structure and habit, with medium-sized leaves, but *M. × verticillata* showing broadly rounded to truncate leaf bases as spotting feature; identification confirmed by calyx length and shape. Bob Leaney

(Peppermint) unaware that that discussion about the species. Discussion are also regular Mint) and A the picture, l on very diffic *M. × gracilis* once seen al occur in Nor in cultivation elsewhere, a south-west o The old (Round-leav Mint) will als is spreading i in the south-be mis-recor similar, but e

all very difficult characters to elicit. Botanists not familiar with *Mentha × gracilis* and *M. × smithiana* are and is usually particularly tall and unbranched; *M. × gracilis* can have red stems, but always seems to

MENTHA VISUAL KEY (see p. 16)

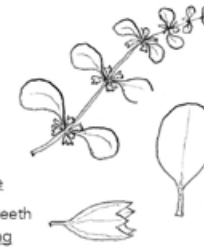
Mints 1–6: Stems without terminal inflorescence

- 1–2 Lower stem leaves <12(15)mm long
- 3–4 Lower stem leaves 15–30mm long
- 5–6 Lower stem leaves 30–80mm long

Mints 7–12: Stems with terminal inflorescence

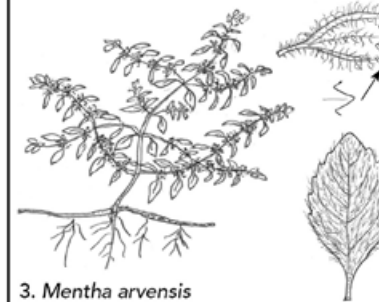
- 7–8 Leaves petiolate (petioles >3mm)
- 9–10 Leaves subsessile (petioles <3mm); leaf teeth acute;
- 11–12 Leaves subsessile; teeth blunt to subacute

- Height <12cm
- Procumbent, mat-forming, rooting at nodes
- Leaves tiny (<7mm long), suborbicular, entire
- ≤6 flowers per node
- Calyx bell-shaped, teeth equal, 1–1.5mm long



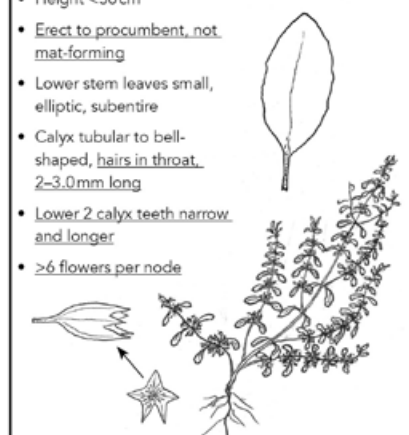
1. *Mentha requienii*

- Height 10–15(60)cm
- Erect to decumbent
- Leaves ovate, cuneate-based, deeply toothed (c.f. *M. pulegium*); always very hairy
- Calyx bell-shaped, 1.5–2.5mm long, densely long-hairy (hairs in throat); teeth equilateral triangular



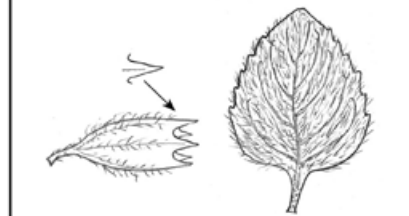
3. *Mentha arvensis*

- Height <30cm
- Erect to procumbent, not mat-forming
- Lower stem leaves small, elliptic, subsentire
- Calyx tubular to bell-shaped, hairs in throat, 2–3.0mm long
- Lower 2 calyx teeth narrow and longer
- >6 flowers per node



2. *Mentha pulegium*

- Height, habitat, leaf size and hairiness as in *M. arvensis*
- Leaves ovate, rounded to truncate based, lower stem leaves medium sized
- Calyx tubular, 2.5–3.5mm long; sparsely to densely long hairy; teeth narrowly triangular acuminate



4. *Mentha × verticillata* (arv. × aqu.)

'Introducing my vice-county' is an occasional popular feature providing an in-depth look at the rare and other charismatic plants and habitats in a particular area of Britain and Ireland



INTRODUCING MY VICE-COUNTY

Isle of Wight (v.c. 10)

COLIN POPE

The Isle of Wight is the largest and second most populous island of England. It is a county in its own right and not part of Hampshire, from which it is separated by the Solent. Three vehicle ferry and two catamaran services provide regular links with the mainland. The Island (as it is referred to by residents), is roughly rhomboid in shape and covers an area of 380 km² (150 square miles). Its landscape is diverse and it is often described as 'England in miniature'. A chalk ridge runs east-west across the Island terminating in The Needles chalk stacks at the western end and Culver cliff at the eastern end. To the north of the chalk ridge, clays predominate; to the south, sandy soils are widespread. A second, smaller chalk outcrop at the southern end of the Island reaches a maximum height of 241 metres at St Boniface Down above Ventnor. The southern coastline is unstable with eroding cliffs. The northern coastline is low lying and estuarine in character.

INTRODUCING MY VICE-COUNTY: Isle of Wight (v.c. 10)



Centaurea cyanus (Cornflower) and *Glebionis segetum* (Corn Marigold) at Cridmore.

Another noteworthy arable species is *Centaurea cyanus* (Cornflower). Until recently, a few sandy fields west of Bleak Down, Rookley, were blue and

spectacular (Dyer's Green). The plant is also present in the largest fixed dune, the only unimproved violet site in the population shown. *Gaudinia* of the meadow grass was has since of unimproved Island. In on the se practice total of

INTRODUCING MY VICE-COUNTY: Isle of Wight (v.c. 10)



Melampyrum arvense (Field Cow-wheat), St Lawrence

St Lawrence and in disturbed ground of a garden. These are the only surviving UK 'native' sites for this plant which is classified as a neophyte.

The National Trust downland ridge at the western end of the Island encompasses some of our most spectacular scenery, terminating in the world-famous Needles chalk stacks and lighthouse. It is also a botanically rich area. The Military Road crosses Afton Down east of Freshwater Bay. The roadside verge here has a large population (over 1000

plants) of *Orobanche picridis* (Oxtongue Broomrape) which are easily seen. This is Britain's rarest native broomrape; the only other site being in Kent.

Gentianella amarella subsp. *anglica* (Early Gentian) is also present in good numbers in favourable years on the thin south facing chalk slopes. The cliff edge is a good place to see *Matthiola incana* (Hoary Stock) which, together with *Lobularia maritima* (Sweet Alison) has been known from here since at least Victorian times. Hoary Stock was first recorded



Matthiola incana (Hoary Stock), Afton Down.

here in 1823. Westwards of Freshwater Bay the long stretch of downland and chalk heath to the Needles is also productive. *Pilosella peleteriana* subsp. *peleteriana* (Shaggy Mouse-car) grows on the cliff top



Part of the large colony of *Orobanche picridis* (Oxtongue Broomrape) at Afton Down



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.

REVIEWS

Compiled by Clive Stace, Book Reviews Editor
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Flora of County Wexford
 Waterford, was completed in 2008, the year recording commenced for the Wexford Flora. The county is 'thin on active recorders' so recording has fallen heavily on the shoulders of the author and Paul O'Meara, and is now down to just nine plants at its only known site in Britain and Ireland. The comprehensiveness of the species accounts for difficult and critical plants is consistently good with few exceptions. Wexford

COUNTRY ROUNDUPS

Compiled by Pete Stroh
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Flora of County Wexford
 Paul Green
 Paul Green, New Wexford, 2023 (p. 595, with numerous coloured photographs) ISBN 9781399930000

ENGLAND

After 20 years of intensive fieldwork resulting in close to 30 million records, followed by one pandemic and three years of checking maps, analysing data, drafting and editing species accounts, and a thousand-and-one other tasks that come with a venture of this sort, *Plant Atlas 2020* has been published. Although the offer of a 50% discount to BSBI members finished at the end of March, the two-volume book can still be purchased with a 30% discount to BSBI members (see bsbi.org/atlas-2020). The online atlas, which contains stacks of additional information, charts and photo galleries, is now also available to view online at bsbi.org/plant-atlas-2020. The main results of the survey, which as you might expect do not make particularly happy reading, are presented in two summary reports (one for Britain, one for Ireland) which can be accessed via links on the home page of the online atlas. May I take this opportunity to again thank you very much for your time and efforts during the atlas project.

Plant Atlas 2020 is the culmination of the most comprehensive survey undertaken of the British and Irish flora, but that doesn't mean we now know the location of each plant of every

below, waiting for just the right conditions to emerge; or it could have been missed simply because it was the wrong time of year – *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine) in August springs to mind. And, perhaps contrary to popular thought we knew it all. Happily, there are a number of nice finds to report since the last roundup – all of them missing from *Plant Atlas 2020*, of course – and some of them really quite notable. One place they really have

Plant Atlas 2020
 Mapping Changes in the Distribution of the British and Irish Flora

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Volume 1
 P.A. Stroh, K. J. Walker, T.A. Humphrey, O.L. Pescott & R.J. Burkarar

FRUNCTON

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