

Leicester Botany Group

Botanising with the group

When: We hold group meetings at locations across the city on Fridays (10am to 12.30pm) and Sundays (10.30am to 1pm).

Where: We aim to improve our knowledge of the least well recorded parts of the City. The route and the meeting point/ parking info will be shared with you in advance of the meeting by email and/ or – if you provide a mobile phone number – via our WhatsApp group. All field meetings will be weather-dependent. If you are unsure whether a meeting is going ahead, please email LeicesterBotany@gmail.com, call Louise on 0797 197 2529, or check the WhatsApp group. Terrain should be navigable but public toilets will not usually be available.

How to get there: If getting to a meeting is difficult, do ask in the group WhatsApp if anyone can offer you a lift. We'll be aiming to minimise the environmental impact of our meetings, so car-sharing, public transport, cycling etc. should all be considered. One person in a car should be the last option, when all else fails!

Who: Everyone with an interest in Leicester's wild and naturalised plants is welcome! You don't need to be an expert botanist or a seasoned recorder. The group will be led in the first instance by Russell Parry (one of three BSBI County Recorders for [Leicestershire & Rutland](#)) and Louise Marsh (botanical tutor and [BSBI Communications Officer](#)) but we hope that in future, other group members will get involved with organising meetings, suggesting locations to visit etc.

What to bring: Come prepared for the weather (waterproofs, suitable footwear, hat, sunscreen etc.); bring handlenses and ID books if you have them, but there may also be the option to borrow a book and/ or a lens. We may sometimes offer the option of heading to a nearby café or pub at the end of the meeting (or during, if the weather changes unexpectedly) so do bring some money but we won't be stopping to eat in the field so no need for a packed lunch.

Aims: There are three main aims of this new group. Russell is keen to get more people recording Leicester's urban plants; Louise's interest is in helping people, especially beginner botanists, gain confidence with plant ID; and we both want to improve our understanding of the City's flora. Sometimes we can do all these things in one big group but at some meetings we may split into two smaller groups, with Russell leading the seasoned recorders and Louise leading the people who want to focus on learning to identify what we see.

Getting started with urban botany

If you're new to all this, check out:

- these [Helpful Hints to Get You Started](#);
- signposts to some [Plant ID resources](#) (most are absolutely free);
- the [BSBI Definitions page](#) which explains the meaning of words such as 'wild', 'alien', 'native', 'naturalised' etc.
- an [inspirational video](#) by a non-botanist who went from knowing no plants at all to recognising 300 species in one year;
- and a [playlist of 19 urban botany videos](#) including a recent one about the [urban plants of Newcastle](#).

Botanising with nature conservation in mind.

Sometimes it helps to pick a specimen and take it home to look at more closely, but we'll be adhering to the [BSBI Code of Conduct](#) and following the Rule of 1 in 20 – in brief, don't pick one specimen of a plant unless you can see 19 more growing in the same place, and unless you're quite sure the plant is not protected by legislation. If in doubt, ask Louise or Russell!

See also the [BSBI's policy on nature conservation](#).

Russell's interim urban botany stats to tickle your fancy.

Species recorded in the most Leicester City monads so far are:

Geum urbanum (Wood Avens), *Cirsium arvense* (Creeping Thistle), *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash), *Hedera helix* (Ivy), *Jacobaea vulgaris* (Common Ragwort), *Acer campestre* (Field Maple), *Buddleja davidii* (Butterfly Bush), *Cirsium vulgare* (Spear Thistle), *Geranium robertianum* (Herb Robert) and *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly).

Commonest grasses

Dactylis glomerata (Cock's-foot), *Arrhenatherum elatius* (False Oat-grass), *Lolium perenne* (Rye-grass), *Anisantha sterilis* (Barren Brome), *Hordeum murinum* (Wall Barley) and *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue).

Commonest alien trees

Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore), *Acer platanoides* (Norway Maple), *Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse Chestnut), *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam).

Some of the greatest spreaders

Helminthotheca echioides (Bristly Oxtongue), *Aquilegia vulgaris* (Columbine), *Malus sylvestris* s.l. & *M. domestica* (Apples), *Erophila verna* (Common Whitlow-grass), *Cupressus lawsoniana* (Lawson's Cypress), *Iris foetidissima* (Stinking Iris), *Hyacinthoides x massartiana* (Hybrid Bluebell), *Cotoneaster* spp., *Erigeron sumatrensis* (Guernsey Fleabane), *Acer saccharinum* (Silver Maple).

Some major population reductions

Chaenorhinum minus (Small Toadflax), *Hyoscyamus niger* (Henbane), *Aira caryophyllea* (Silver Hair-grass), *Lycopsis arvensis* (Bugloss), *Alopecurus geniculatus* (Marsh Foxtail), *Linum catharticum* (Fairy Flax).