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**BSBI New Year Plant Hunt 2018 reveals hundreds of wildflowers in bloom.**

The results are in for BSBI’s seventh New Year Plant Hunt, when plant-lovers across Britain and Ireland head out to see what is flowering in their local patch. More people took part this year than ever before, hunting for up to three hours over the New Year period1. Here’s what they found:

* A total of 9,907 records of plants in bloom across Britain and Ireland.
* 532 different species were recorded, compared to 492 last year and 611 in 2016.
* 612 lists were submitted, compared to 460 in 2017.
* More than 1,000 people participated, either individually, as part of family groups or as members of botanical recording groups.
* Plant hunters joined in from Caithness to Guernsey, from Donegal to Norfolk, from west Cork to the Kent coast.
* Plant Hunts were held in the wider countryside and in urban areas including London, Edinburgh, Leicester, Cambridge, Cardiff, Dublin and Bristol.

As expected, the milder south and west of Britain and Ireland had the highest numbers of species in flower2 – 114 at Phillack in Cornwall – a similar number to 2017 but nowhere near the 2016 top total of 162 recorded in Berkshire.

BSBI’s Head of Science Dr Kevin Walker3 has analysed this year’s results4 and compared them with those from previous years. He said “People found significantly fewer species in bloom this year and during the 2017 Plant Hunt, probably due to colder conditions in the months preceding New Year. This contrasts with the much milder winters of 2014-6. Interestingly, this difference was much less marked for non-native species”.

The main findings were:

* 39% of the records submitted were of species we might reasonably expect to flower at New Year. These include typical ‘All Year Rounders’ such as Shepherd’s-purse as well as ‘Winter Specialists’ such as Winter Heliotrope.
* The top five species were Daisy, Groundsel, Dandelion, Annual Meadow-grass, and Gorse – almost identical to previous years and all (native) plants we would expect to be flowering at this time of year.
* 38% of the records were of species which normally flower after midsummer and had managed to carry on flowering. These include ‘Autumn Stragglers’ such as Yarrow, Ragwort and Hogweed.
* Only 14% were ‘Springtime Specialists’ like Primrose and Lesser Celandine, so there is no indication of an early spring. This proportion is similar to previous years.

46% of species recorded were non-natives. This includes plants from warmer climates that have escaped from gardens or cultivation, become naturalised in the wild and were able to extend their flowering into the winter months.

As in previous years, urban areas tended to have more non-native species in flower than rural areas, as there are more sheltered and disturbed places with warm microclimates where alien plants can thrive.

Kevin said “Further work is required before we can be certain about the causes of these unseasonal events but the New Year Plant Hunt results are already helping us build up a clearer, up-to-date picture of what’s going on”.

ENDS

Contact Louise Marsh, BSBI Communications Officer, for further information.

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The Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) is the leading society promoting the study, understanding and enjoyment of wild plants in Britain and Ireland. Founded in 1836, we are now one of the world's largest contributors of biological records, many collected by our volunteer members, both amateur and professional botanists, who benefit from our research, training and outreach programmes.

**Notes:**

1. The 2018 New Year Plant Hunt ran from Saturday 30th December 2017 to Tuesday 2nd January 2018.

2. The New Year Plant Hunt website has an interactive map showing where plants were recorded; click to view individual lists: <https://nyph.bsbi.org/>

3. Dr Kevin Walker is BSBI’s Head of Science and conducted the New Year Plant Hunt analysis. Kevin is available for interview on Wednesday 24th or Thursday 25th January:

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4. To download Kevin’s analysis in full, and for New Year Plant Hunt 2018 blogposts, images and social media, please visit: <http://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

Please contact Louise Marsh to request images at higher resolution.