April 2021 Sample Issue
See inside for a selection of articles from BSBI News no. 147 and details of how to join the BSBI. Members receive three print copies of BSBI News each year as part of the package of membership benefits.
In BSBI News, members report on botanical topics such as plant conservation, new discoveries and much more...

The BSBI and plant conservation
KEVIN WALKER

Dianthus gallicus (Jersey Pink) newly recorded from mainland UK
PHIL COLLIER, ROBIN GARNETT & MARTIN RAND

Vascular plant Red Data List for Great Britain: a summary of amendments in years 14 and 15 (2019–20) of the annual amendments process
SIMON J. LEACH
ON BEHALF OF THE GB RED LIST GROUP FOR VASCULAR PLANTS

Bunium bulbocastanum (Great Pignut) on the South Downs
DAVID STREETER

Vascular plant Red Data List for Great Britain: a summary of amendments in years 14 and 15 (2019–20) of the annual amendments process
SIMON J. LEACH
ON BEHALF OF THE GB RED LIST GROUP FOR VASCULAR PLANTS

Following previous updates (listed under Reference below), the GB Red List Group for vascular plants has agreed further changes to the GB Red Data List covering years 14 and 15 (2019–20) of the monumental Flow of Great Britain and Ireland Red List database, and the most recent edition of the Vascular Red Data List of the British Isles, 2009. In the following account, references to these

On 16 June 2018 the Sussex Botanical Recording Society held a meeting of 14 members based on the Fulking excursion of the South Downs in West Sussex (w.c. 13). The excursion had been delayed by an August meeting and was intended to provide an opportunity for less experienced members to become more familiar with the rich downsland flora for which the area is well-known. At one point in the day a convivial group of enthusiasts reported that they were having a problem with their field guides’ umbellifer keys which were resolutely refusing to confirm that a recently discovered colony of Bunium bulbocastanum (Great Pignut) on the South Downs in West Sussex (w.c. 13) Nick Sturt

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A regular section is ‘Beginner’s Corner’ which covers identification of common species in a non-technical way and includes general articles on botany and recording plants.

BEGINNER’S CORNER

When is a Dandelion not a Dandelion? (A beginner’s guide to yellow composites)

HAZEL METHERELL

In summer there appear lots of dandelion-ish looking flowers, but they are often not. The heads consist of many individual flowers called ‘bracts’, the outer ones usually each with one long yellow ‘ray’. I am not counting flowers with much smaller heads, like Prickly Lettuce (Lactuca serriola), Nipplewort (Lepidium campestre) or Wall Lettuce (Lactuca muralis) or anything rare enough not to come across it accidentally. And we’re certainly not going to delve into Hawkweeds (Hieracium) at this stage!

If the plant has long raggedly lobed leaves in a ground-level rosette, with bare unbranched stems (often hairy when snapped) and a single densely packed head of yellow flowers, you have the real thing: Taraxacum agg., a Dandelion. There are over 250 species. Let’s not go there for now! But if you want a taste see https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardening/identification/taurusroots.

Let’s start with an easy one! Mouse-ear Hawkweed (Pilosella officinarum). The flowers are generally a more lemon shade than the other options; a single head on an unbranched stem. You can soon spot them at a distance. The leaves have long white hairs, each about 10mm long. Pilosus means hairless, so Pilosella is very appropriate.

No long white hairs? Then look at the bracts (phylaries): encircling the green part of the flowerhead. Hawkweed-heads (Crepis) have an inner set of bracts clapping the flower bases like a cup, and an outer set of smaller bracts spreading outwards like a saucer. The most common ones are Smooth Hawk’s-head (C. capillaris), which is usually hairless and Beaked Hawk’s-head (C. capillaris) which is usually hairy. Both usually have multiple (i.e., branched) flowerheads. Unfortunately the only reliable way to tell them apart is by looking at the little parachute fruits. In Beaked Hawk’s-head the seed is drawn out into a long trap, like a long beak, with the parachute hairs at the top. In Smooth Hawk’s-head the seed is cone-shaped with the hairs on the end, without a beak. Sounds tricky, but they are very distinct.

No outer set of bracts? Then consider Hawkbit next (why do they give groups such similar and unhelpful English names?). Hawkbit (Hieracium) have a basal rosette of leaves and one or two flowers on leafless stems. Flowerheads are 20–40 mm diameter. Look at the leaves. If they have forked hairs, like a tiny ‘letter Y’, then you have a Hawkbit. There are two common ones: Rough Hawkbit (H. erecta) and Lesser Hawkbit (H. ovata), usually with a single flowerhead on each stem, and again the only reliable way to tell them apart is by looking at the fruits. Rough Hawkbit has the usual long white hairs on the top of all the fruits. In Lesser Hawkbit the hairs are missing from the outermost ring of fruits. In general, the flowerheads and leaves of Rough Hawkbit are larger than Lesser Hawkbit, and the stem is hairy.

Just unforked ‘simple’ hairs? Now you need to reset to surgery! Both of the following usually have multiple flowerheads. The key character is that if you pull the head apart, there are papery scales
The ‘aliens’ section features recent discoveries of escaped and naturalised plants and regular updates of the Plant Alert scheme to report potentially invasive plants grown in gardens.

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS

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The generosity of contributors requires me to keep this introduction as short as I can, so that as much of the botanical interest as possible can be shared. Suffice it to say that, where feasible, records that might have gone into the preceeding year have been integrated into the records entries themselves, if in a compressed form. Many thanks.

V.c.3 (S. Devon)

*Potentanum petiolatum* (Li), L. H:) ex, Alison Ivy-leaved Germanium, Plymouth (SX709537), 11/8/2020, P. Pullen. Growing on a limestone cliff amongst ivy and brambles. A trailing or climbing perennial (Geraniaceae) with somewhat fleshy leaves and very variable with respect to flower colour and markings. A native of S. Africa. The determination is somewhat provisional and the plant could be a hybrid (P. Pullen pers. comm.).

*Nelumbium L. (China), Exeter Quay (SX319921), 29/11/2020, R. Hodgson several flowering plants growing at quay side. The first Devon record. It is almost certainly being under-recorded in the non-flowering stages. The DDD now contains 11 other records divided between ccc. 6, 12, 23, 29, 39 and 40. See Adventures & Aliens News 14 for more details of the Chew Valley Lake (v.c.6) record. It has also been reported in vcs 14 and 44 (M. Berry, 2019). 

*Taxus baccata* L. (Alder's yew), Plymouth (SX961530652), 28/9/2020, P. Pullen (conf. J. Poland); four plants growing close together on disturbed ground at Derriford Hospital. An evergreen garden shrub (Taxaceaeae), native to the south-eastern US. The trunk is not absent or prostrate (as in *E. glyptos* (Spanish-laguer)). The leaves soon split into fine filaments particularly towards the tips, thus the specific epithet. See Island & Clement (2020), p. 112.

V.c.4 (N. Devon)

*Mimulus junion* (Marsdenia Peru), Bideford (SS466929263), 13/11/2020, R. L Kirby, one plant growing on pavement at base of high South-facing retaining wall, Torridge Lane, East-Bideford. The first Devon record. A perennial garden plant (Gesneriaceae), native to tropical America. It seems to set good seed. Of the two principal colour forms, red- and yellow-flowered, the red seems by far the most common. It is the only (wild) British representative of the family, which includes the Bougainvillaeas. Clement et al. (2005): 38, Stace (2019): 537.

Nerica filamentosas, Plymouth, South Devon (v.c.3). P.H. Pullen

The western marches of the Mediterranean and central Europe, the Mediterranean, southern Russia and south-west Asia. There appear to be only two other British records, for vcs 1972 and 171906. In both cases it is believed to have been introduced with grass seeds. BSBI Atlas 45 p. 1 and pp. 24-25. Nye et al. (1996), fig. 16.

V.c.106 (E. Ross)


V.c.121 (C. Dublin)

*Saussuria torosa* (Bitterly) Woolcock, Sandford (O975726890), 15/1/2020, A. Fitzgerald.

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Plant Alert – March 2021 update

Spring has finally sprung, marking the beginning of another Plant Alert season. The time this has reached you, we will have just finished our first event of 2021, a presentation covering the challenges of finding the future’s invader plants, hosted by the Field Studies Council as part of their Natural History Live virtual sessions.

In the darker months, we began cleaning the Plant Alert database, in particular verifying records from photos submitted and removing those that were not from inside gardens. Possibly encouraged through our media campaign and illustration of newspaper articles with well-known invasives such as Japanese Knotweeds and Himalayan Balsams, a number of people reported these species from their local area, but not from inside gardens. The removal of these records will, of course, change our list of sup reported species, and we hope, further highlight other ornamentals potentially making the initial leap out of gardens.

Up to March 2021, we have now received 141 unique species recorded. Of those records, Phragmites australis (Norse poles) and Urtica dioica (Cress Plant) are of a number of species yet to be recorded on the BSBI database outside of gardens. Phragmites australis is a clump forming evergreen grass spreading by stolons. The attractive Harrison grass grows to around 1m tall and develops into arching sprays of seed-like seeds. Although not currently readily available, it is becoming more popular as an architectural plant, meaning it is species to keep an eye on.

*Urtica dioica* is a twisted fast-growing evergreen climber in the Apocynaceae, producing small sprays of bell-shaped, scented, white or pink flowers in late summer to autumn. Preferring a sheltered position, it will be one to watch in courtyards and urban microclimates. A native of South America, it is listed as an invasive species in parts of Australia.

If either of these species is growing in a garden near you, we would appreciate further records of their behaviour: Those who have already sent in records of dominating ornamentals in the garden may be pleased to hear Plant Alert data is currently being used to help update the list of recommended species for horticulturists for non-invasive gardening plant choices. A guide to plants you can use in place of invasive native nobles encompasses three books covering aquatic, landscaping and home gardening plant choices of those least likely to cause problems to the environment should they escape from the garden.

With the growing season underway, nurseries and garden centres are full to bursting with over 30,000 ornamental plants. RHS Plant Finder 2020 for us to choose from. Help us by spreading the word on Plant Alert to enable gardeners to report those plants spreading to an extent that they have to be controlled to prevent new growing other plants or parts of the garden where they are not wanted.

To keep abreast of Plant Alert events and records find us on Twitter @PlantAlert or our website

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• Your password for the members-only area of the BSBI website where you can access scientific papers published in *New Journal of Botany*, view electronic back issues of *BSBI News* 2015–2021... and much, much more.