



The Basal Project – photo contributions needed!

RICHARD MABBUTT

The Basal Project is a free web resource to help with the identification of the basal and juvenile leaves of wild plants of Britain and Ireland. It is aimed at beginner botanists, to give them the opportunity to use picture matching for non-flowering material. Developing more botanists is extremely important for the future. Many of us started out by picture matching; the Basal Project will help beginners to focus on not only the flowers in their books, but on the vegetative features too, thus encouraging them to become better all-round botanists.



I have worked on this project for five years, and have found and photographed 650 species so far in their juvenile and basal state. There is a link on the website to a downloadable Excel spreadsheet which lists all species found so far, and all those still

Basal leaf of *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony).
Richard Mabbutt

sought after. There are approximately 1750 species still to find, and that's where I am asking for your help – otherwise this project may take another 15–20 years to complete! The Excel sheet has a search facility, so trawling through 1750 plant names is not required when you are off out for the day, and have a rough idea of what you may see and, hopefully, photograph.

Not all species groups are readily identifiable vegetatively, so I have omitted hybrids, microspecies, varieties, grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, some rare trees and submerged aquatics. I am keen to ensure that every image includes something to provide a sense of scale, such as a hand, car keys or a ruler.

There is a search bar on the home page where you can enter partial or full scientific or common names, genus, species or family. Enter 'thistle', and all the thistles come up, enter 'Hypericum' and



First-year leaf rosette of *Carduus crispus* (Welted Thistle). *Richard Mabbutt*

you get the Hypericums. There is also a families tab where you can go to every single plant in that family, which is important as we know, in gaining an ID for beginners. Click on any photograph, and it will enlarge for detail. There is also a tab for useful links for beginners, so if people have suggestions for additional ID websites, these would be most welcome.

Not all that remains to be found is rare. After five years, some common plants have not been photographed, e.g. *Acer campestre* (Field Maple), *Atriplex littoralis* (Grass-leaved Orache), *Hypericum androsaemum* (Tutsan), *Geranium macrorrhizum* (Rock

Crane’s-bill), which has eluded me four times, and quite a lot of common trees, as I only chose to include trees this year. I would also be grateful for photos that are better than those currently on the website. There’s always room for improvement!

Please contact me at the email address below if you would like to get in touch or contribute photos. Contact details are also on the website. Credit will, of course, be given for all images used.

Richard Mabbutt
basalproject.org.uk
richardmabbutt@aol.com