

Getting *Rubus* Out There

This title of three *Rubus* workshops presented at the [BSBI Recorders' Conference 2018](#) was in line with the general theme of the conference that of Getting Botany Out There.

Note however that methods of **Getting Rubus Out There** are by no means new and it was demonstrated that numerous herbarium collections of *Rubus* are within museums although it was generally the case that the study of *Rubus* was limited to wealthy men, several of whom were clergymen. Nevertheless the legacies of their collecting or acquisition of specimens are most valuable resources. For Britain and Ireland there is a **Set of British Rubi** that was gathered around the 1890s and a vast number of specimens were distributed via the Botanical Exchange Clubs. Some museums such as Liverpool and the National Museum of Wales have put together catalogues of determined *Rubus* specimens which are very useful indeed.

Herbarium specimens were viewed extensively during the workshops to give a general idea of variability and classification of brambles. Specimens are essential for serious study and for providing a reference collection as evidence of what has been found within say a recorder's vice-county.

In order to aid the enthusiast further the details of numerous specimens and/or images can be viewed online. Examples illustrated at the *Rubus* workshops included:

A *Rubus* Herbarium by Keith Spurgin

<https://www.rubusology.com/>

This site is being developed by Keith Spurgin. There are a lot of images here taken by Ray Gould particularly from Cornwall and Devon but also further afield.

HerbariumatHome

<http://herbariaunited.org/atHome/>

Lot of images have been unloaded to this site. Within limits this is a valuable platform for the determination of voucher specimens by referees. Note that the taxon names applied should not be considered correct unless a batologist has undertaken a determination.

Manchester Museum

<http://harbour.man.ac.uk/mmcustom/BotQuery.php>

A good number of specimens has been documented and until recently there was at least one image per *Rubus* species on the website. Note however that the late Alan Newton's collection has been donated to the museum and there are several *Rubus* species which are new to the museum which need to be documented. **There is also a lot of work to be done uploading higher resolution images.**

There are also websites with recent images taken in the field situation:

British Wildflowers

<http://www.british-wild-flowers.co.uk/>

A good number of *Rubus* images have been uploaded to this site.

British and Irish Bramble species (Field Studies Council)

<https://www.fscbiodiversity.uk/sites/vis-rubus.html>

This is a multi-access key being developed steadily by David Earl and Richard Burkmar. There are some images available and a knowledge base. In due course species data will possibly be added so as to provide distribution maps.

Handbooks

The one to use is Edees & Newton *Brambles of the British Isles* (1988). The use of earlier works should generally be avoided by the novice. Details of the more recently described species can be found in *Watsonia* and the *New Journal of Botany*.

Plant Crib

A good introduction to ID is provided by Rob Randall's key to be found in the Plant Crib and available as a download from the [BSBI Identification page](#):

http://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Rubus_Crib.pdf

This only takes you to Section or Series but it is a start, from this it is then necessary to use the keys in Edees & Newton together with the FSC multi-access key.

Updating the Edees & Newton keys to include additional taxa and making these available as downloads is a task for 2020 onwards.

County Floras

These can be excellent and as a novice I used the Floras of Cheshire and Staffordshire a great deal. I also found a key at the back of Travis's Flora of South Lancashire useful. **Note that county Floras soon become dated and there is scope for updating County *Rubus* accounts and making these available as downloads.**

BSBI Distribution Database

<https://database.bsbi.org/>

Very useful indeed for seeing what species have been recorded where in a vice-county. If the details of records are very precise, botanists could visit a site and attempt to find and identify a bramble or several brambles.

Email exchange

This can be very useful especially if images are included.

One Note

One of our workshop attendees uses this app in the field situation to build up a set of text and images.

Field Excursions and workshops

The standard outreach which provides an introduction to this difficult genus and in the case of field excursions provides valuable records for a vice-county. Field excursions are very useful for recorders and enthusiasts as they can gather specimens and images of named species or local endemics that may merit description.

Image recognition

Can this be developed for *Rubus* species? One to explore.

Species information sheets and blogs

Another 2020 onwards project to consider. This could be most valuable. A recorded talk through the features/images of a species would be a great help.

DNA Studies and Tool Kits

Finally in the future it might be possible to ID a bramble using a DNA kit of some kind. This would probably require a type of bar-coding of species and there will always be un-described species that would not be recognised by the technology. We are already using this technology to advance our knowledge of the evolution of our British and Irish Bramble Flora.