

Warwickshire Flora Group

Newsletter No. 14 November 2017.

New and interesting records for Warwickshire.

The WFG field meeting at Broom produced two new species for the county. An **Onion (*Allium cepa*)** was found growing in the crack at the edge of the bridge over the A46. A Sedum from the edge of the bridge over the nearby river was collected and grown on until flowering when it was identified as ***Sedum kamtschaticum* var. *ellacombeanum*** by Ray Stevenson the BSBI Sedum referee. This is a species regularly sold in garden centres, usually labelled wrongly. Try www.cactus-mail.com/sedum if you think you may be a Sedum enthusiast.

The field meeting to Kenilworth Castle in May found a plant of **Purple Filbert (*Corylus maxima* "Purpurea")**, naturalized in a hedge, at least ½ mile away from the nearest house.

John Roberts found the first record of the delicate white **Van Houtte's Spiraea (*Spiraea vanhouttei*)** in Winderton in April and the very wet joint meeting with the Black Country group turned up the first record of **Small-flowered Wintercress (*Barbarea stricta*)**.

The most pleasant surprise this year came from Mike Slater who sent in a photo of the ridiculously coloured leaves of ***Dactylorhiza fuchsii* var. *rhodochila*** a rare variant of our Common Spotted Orchid.

If you did not attend the Tithe Barn field meeting in October, you may be wondering about the ID of the strange plant that was said to be growing on Graham Robson's lawn. This turned out not to be our native Sea Holly or Field Eryngo as suggested by the Rugby Nats., but a seedling of **Blue Eryngo (*Eryngium planum*)**. This is a native of Southern Europe that is becoming a popular garden plant and is spreading throughout the Midlands as a garden escape.



Dactylorhiza fuchsii var. *rhodochila* Photo by M. Slater.



Eryngium planum, Blue Eryngo Photo by J. Walton.

BSBI NEW YEAR'S PLANT HUNT

It is becoming more and more difficult to choose a new site for our regular winter wander, as we seem to have been everywhere.

BEDWORTH has been selected this year, as tetrad SP38T has not been well surveyed. As usual, we will be recording everything as well as counting plants in flower. There will be a stretch of canal, scrubland, railway bridges, industrial sites, part of a lake and gardens to keep us busy.

We plan to meet at 10 a.m. on Saturday 30 December. This is only a provisional date as the BSBI will not be announcing the dates for 2018 until their Exhibition Meeting on 25 November. We will meet at the Miners Welfare Park car park where there will be no charge for parking. This can be found off the east side of the Rye Piece Ringway, near the Bedworth Ex-Servicemen's Social Club opposite the entrance to the Bedworth Civic Hall car park. The post code is CV12 8JT and the grid reference SP361868. We will finish at 1 p.m. Try Nuneaton and Bedworth Council parking website for more details.

BOTANICAL TALKS AT LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

These are very thin on the ground this winter.

Thu 19 Jan Warwickshire Trees

Steven Falk

Coventry NHS

Thu 16 Mar Trees of the National Memorial Arboretum

Jim Brown

Coventry NHS

If you are really desperate come to "In Pursuit of Flowers in Deepest Warwickshire" by John Walton at Rugby NHS on 23 November. Coventry NHS and Rugby NHS both have websites.

Be prepared to pay a small visitor fee for each meeting.

ORCHID LEAVES AND FLEABANES

Russell Tonks drew my attention to the excellent free download, A Beginner's Vegetative Guide to the Orchids of the British Isles by Mike Waller. You can discover which species produce overwintering rosettes, and find out if a particular rosette will flower or not in the coming year. There is a general leaf shape key to the genera and then there are details and photographs for each of the species covered. It includes all of the Warwickshire species except **Dune Helleborine (*Epipactis dunensis*)** which can be considered just a microspecies, and **Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*)** which doesn't have any leaves at all. It is a pity the download is not available as a well produced booklet too, as it would look splendid.

I have also taken the liberty of sending out a scan of the recent key and pictorial guide to of *Conyza* (Fleabanes) that was published in a recent BSBI News. I hope that the Warwickshire BSBI members have already been studying it closely! Fleabanes are becoming increasingly common on waste ground but we do not receive many records.

C. canadensis (Canadian Fleabane) and ***C. floribunda*** (Bilbao Fleabane) are both quite common in the county, and since the publication of this guide we are finding more ***C. sumatrensis*** (Guernsey Fleabane). Warwickshire currently has only one record of ***C. bonariensis*** (Argentine Fleabane). It was seen in Church Terrace, Leamington Spa in 2005 by J. Partridge. The drawings are excellent, with details of bud shape, rosette leaves, hairs and everything you need to make an identification. The author has introduced the helpful characteristic of "uncountable hairs" which seems to work very well. Di Napier has been studying them, but perhaps we should offer a prize for the first person to find all four species at the same site.

BSBI ATLAS 2020

It is that time of year again. This is a good time to send in your 2017 records as we are not quite so busy.

Thanks to hard work from everybody, and especially John and Val Roberts, we have only a handful of tetrads left with less than 50 species in them. If you are worried about how and what to send in, please phone us on 01827 712455, rather than writing a long e mail.

KNOW YOUR RAGWORTS

On the recent Baginton field meeting we came across a small rather bedraggled Ragwort in the churchyard and there was some discussion about its identity. At this time of year you cannot rely on the large basal rosettes to identify *Senecio jacobaea* (Common Ragwort) as these may well have disappeared. This reminder should help you sort the two common species by their flower characteristics.

Senecio jacobaea (Common Ragwort)

about 13 upper involucral bracts
outer achenes glabrous

Ray florets (petals) 5 – 8 mm. long

Senecio squalidus (Oxford Ragwort)

about 20 upper involucral bracts
outer achenes hairy

Ray florets usually > 8 mm. long

Remember, *S. squalidus* tends to be more urban, liking pavement cracks and walls and also flowers earlier. Also look out for *Senecio inaequidens* (Narrow-leaved Ragwort), a South African alien that is spreading through the Midlands that has virtually linear leaves and a woody stem. You will need to use Stace for a description as it is not in Rose.,



CANALS – KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

Whilst surveying the canal near Brinklow in June last year, I was disappointed to meet a two man team from the Canals Trust "tidying up" the canal edge with a large mower/brushcutter and a strimmer. They were not just keeping the path clear but hacking down Sedge tussocks and all the marginal plants. If you have seen such destruction near you could you let us know, please.