



BSBI New Year Plant Hunt 2016 finds an unprecedented number of wildflowers in bloom.

The results are in for BSBI's fifth New Year Plant Hunt, when wildflower enthusiasts across Britain and Ireland head out over the holidays to see what is in bloom in their local patch.

More than 850 plant-lovers spent up to three hours between 1st and 4th January hunting for wild plants in flower and contributed to these amazing results:

- A total of 8,568 records of plants in bloom across Britain and Ireland.
- A stunning 612 different species flowering, compared to 368 last year.
- We received more than 400 lists from individuals, families and botanical recording groups.

Ryan Clark¹, who co-ordinated the New Year Plant Hunt this year, said "It was astonishing to see so many records flooding in, from Guernsey to Shetland and Kent to Donegal. As expected, the milder south and west of Britain had the highest numbers of species in flower, but we also had more than 60 species reported blooming in Edinburgh. Lists from Ireland also had consistently high numbers of plants in flower at New Year".

Does the number of plants flowering this New Year herald an early spring?

BSBI's Head of Science Dr Kevin Walker² said "There does not seem to be any real indication of an early spring. Although spring-flowering specialists, such as Lesser Celandine, Cow Parsley and Sweet Violet, were widely recorded, they make up less than a fifth of the total.

"At least three quarters of the plants recorded were 'Autumn Stragglers' like Yarrow, Red Campion and Red Dead-nettle that had carried on flowering in the absence of a hard frost. The two most commonly recorded plants were Daisy and Dandelion – which we would expect to be flowering at this time of year."

612 species in flower represents about a quarter of the species that occur regularly in Britain and Ireland. Around a third of these 612 species are alien plants from warmer climates that may have escaped from gardens or cultivation and are able to continue flowering until winter frosts knock them back. As in previous years, urban areas tended to have more species in flower than rural areas. This is to be expected: there are more sheltered and disturbed areas with warm microclimates where both native and alien plants can thrive.

Kevin said "Conventional wisdom on what should flower when is clearly out of date, and for many alien plants we simply don't have good data on peak flowering times. The New Year Plant Hunt results will help us build up a clearer, up-to-date picture of what's going on".

ENDS

Contact Louise Marsh, BSBI Publicity & Outreach Officer, for further information.

Email: louise.marsh@bsbi.org

Mobile: 0797 197 2529

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 members, both amateur and professional botanists, who benefit from our research, training and outreach programmes.

Notes:

1. **Ryan Clark is an ecologist and member of BSBI's Meetings & Communications Committee. He co-ordinated New Year Plant Hunt activity this year and in 2015.**

2. Dr Kevin Walker is **BSBI's** Head of Science and conducted the New Year Plant Hunt analysis. Kevin is available for interview today 26th January from 11am until 12 noon:

Email: kevin.walker@bsbi.org

Phone: 01423 549978

3. Daily reports on the New Year Plant Hunt are here on the BSBI News & Views blog:
<http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.co.uk/>

4. A sample of our New Year Plant Hunt images can be seen here:
<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23newyearplanthunt&src=typd>

Please contact Louise Marsh to request images at higher resolution.

5. New Year Plant Hunt records and images posted to the BSBI Facebook page are here:
<https://www.facebook.com/BSBI2011>