



## **PYRUS**

Studies of *Pyrus* in SW Europe and N Africa by Aldasoro *et al.* (1996) have suggested a broader definition of *P. cordata* than has previously been applied in Britain. The traditional British treatment has been more strict, including only plants in Devon and Cornwall which have round or slightly pear-shaped fruits, rarely exceeding 20 mm in diameter and which generally lose their calyx at maturity (cf. Jackson 1995).

Unpublished work by Reading University (based on an examination of material from British herbaria) has identified numerous individuals which display character states intermediate between those attributed by Aldasoro *et al.* (1996) to *P. cordata* and *P. communis*, or which exhibit character combinations incompatible with either species definition. This may reflect the well-documented ability of pears to form fertile inter-specific hybrids (Westwood & Bjornstad 1971). A number of collections of these intermediate forms were made from the Wye Valley and West Gloucestershire in the early part of this century; this region appears to be a centre of diversity for British pears, and might repay further survey (pers. comm., R. Davis & A. Culham, 1998).

Until a British/European definition of *P. cordata* is agreed, it is suggested that material of any plants matching the characters below or showing characters combinations or states intermediate between these definitions are collected for further investigation with full location details. Fruit formation may not occur as the species is self-incompatible.

Aldasoro *et al.* (1996) regard *P. cordata* as a well-characterised species which usually has a globose fruit with a deciduous calyx (it can be somewhat variable), and they key the species out from *P. communis* using fruit peduncle width (apparently measured on herbarium specimens, not fresh):

*P. cordata*: Fruit peduncles 0.8-1.6 mm wide.

*P. communis*: Fruit peduncles 1.5-2.8 mm wide.

Other characters they give which might help to separate the taxa are summarised in the Table below. Their distribution map suggests it occurs in SW England to at least Gloucestershire (the Welsh record is a plotting error).

# Plant Crib

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	<i>P. cordata</i> Desv.	<i>P. communis</i> L.
Spines	Present	Present or absent
Leaf margin	Crenate, not ciliate	Entire (rarely crenate), ciliate
Petiole length	Mean 28 mm, range 12-39 mm	Mean 32 mm, range 11-48 mm
Leaf indumentum below	Glabrous	Glabrous to hairy
Calyx	Deciduous (some persistent)	Persistent
Petal length	Mean 9.1 mm, range 7.8-12.7 mm	Mean 13.2 mm, range 12-15 mm
Fruit shape	Globose (some pyriform)	Pyriform
Width of fruit peduncle	Mean 1.1 mm, range 0.8-1.6 mm	Mean 1.9 mm, range 1.5-2.8 mm
Fruit length / peduncle length	Mean 0.57 mm, range 0.2-1.4 mm	Mean 0.85 mm, range 0.3-1.9 mm

- References* Aldasoro, J. J., Aedo, C. & Muñoz Garmendia, F. (1996). *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* **121**: 143-158.  
Jackson, A. (1995). *British Wildlife* **6(5)**: 273-278.  
Westwood, M. M., & Bjornstad, H. O. (1971). *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club* **98**: 22-24.