

TARAXACUM SECTION ERYTHROSPERMA

Section *Erythrosperma* species are largely restricted to well-drained, often shallow soils in habitats such as short chalk and limestone grassland, sand-dune grasslands, cliff-tops and sandy or gravelly heaths. Some species can also occur in man-made habitats such wall-tops, gravelly tracks, lawns or well-drained road-banks. Most species are small and delicate, so are poor competitors and rarely behave as ruderals or weeds.

In the British Isles, the abundance and diversity of *Erythrosperma* species tends to be greatest in south-east England and lowest in the North-west, although they probably occur in every vice-county, and the dunes and limestones of e.g. The Burren or Sutherland boast several species.

Thirty-two *Erythrosperma* species are recorded from the British Isles. Of these, six are endemic, and four (*T. pseudoproximum*, *T. pseudolacistophyllum*, *T. falcatum* and *T. disseminatum*) are rare adventives with only a handful of British or Irish records and are not treated here. *Taraxacum placidum*, only known from Alderney in our Islands is also omitted as is *T. cenabense* of uncertain status.

The centre of diversity of the section is south-central Europe, where in thermophilous grasslands apomicts (triploid and tetraploid) coexist with sexual diploid populations (collectively known as *T. erythrospermum*) in a confusion of forms which are probably still generating new apomictic hybrid entities. *Taraxacum erythrospermum* has twice been recorded as a British adventive, but not in last 40 years. Apomictic species range eastwards to Turkey and south to Andalucía.

Section *Erythrosperma* species are:

- Small and delicate with highly dissected leaves.
- Exterior bracts are <9 mm long, usually <7 mm.
- The open capitulum is usually <30 mm in diameter, often less.
- Many species lack pollen and/or have yellow styles.
- Only one species (*T. inopinatum*) has spotted leaves.
- Achenes are frequently reddish to dark purple in colour and the cone (coloured section connecting achene body with rostrum) is narrowly cylindrical (lens)

On northern sand-dunes, *Erythrosperma* species, especially *T. haworthianum* (see below), can be confused with our two Section *Obliqua* species which have greyish achenes with a short conical cone.

Plant Crib 3

A. J. Richards 2020. Additional photos by C. Ferguson-Smyth, T. Rich

1a. Species lacking pollen (check stigmas with a lens) or only a few grains present (2a-2b) (for lead 1b see page 5)

2a. Ligules partly in-rolled, pointed, reddish at tip; capitulum rarely opening fully **T. argutum**



2b. Ligules flat, square-ended, capitula opening fully in good light (3a-3b)

3a. Leaves spotted and blotched (uniquely in this section), achenes dark red. Atlantic Britain.

T. inopinatum



3b. Leaves not spotted, rarely blotched on interlobes, achenes rarely dark red (4a-4b)

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- 4a.** Leaf-lobes >6 in number on each side, poorly differentiated; leaf semi-prostrate, narrowly oblong; ligule with dark teeth. Dry grasslands, lawns, mostly southern
T. glauciniforme

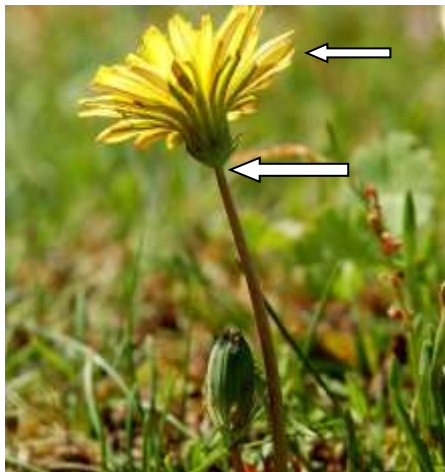


- 4b.** Leaf-lobes <6 in number on each side (5a-5b)

- 5a.** Exterior bracts <5.5 mm long, erect; achenes dark red to violet-purple when ripe (6a-6b)

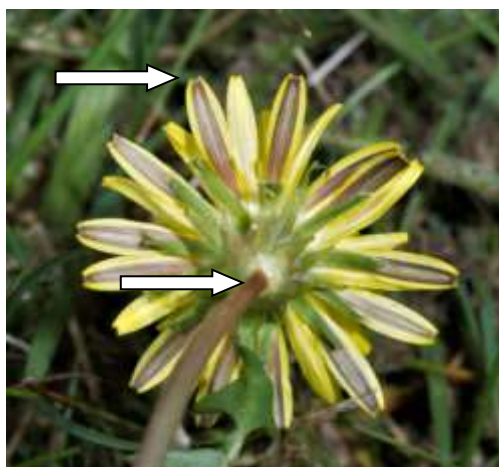
- 6a.** Scape completely glabrous, even at apex (lens); ligule teeth dark

T. rubicundum



- 6b.** Scape slightly pubescent when young; ligule teeth yellow

T. parnassicum



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5b. Exterior bracts >5.5 mm, recurved to spreading; achenes brown to cinnamon (7a-7b)

7a. At least the lower (outer) exterior bracts reflexed; ligule teeth yellow

T. fulvum



7b. Outermost exterior bracts spreading to somewhat recurved; ligule teeth usually darker than ligule (8a-8b)

8a. Exterior bracts spreading, pruinose, bordered, <3 x long as broad, achenes dark brown **T. proximum**



8b. Exterior bracts scarcely pruinose, dark green below, achenes straw-coloured to pale brown (9a-9b)

9a. Ligule stripes brown, teeth reddish; styles discoloured; achene body 3.0 mm. Widespread.

T. fulviforme



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- 9b.** Ligule striped grey-violet, teeth dark; styles yellow when fresh and dry; achene body 3.5 mm.
Orkney and Outer Hebrides

T. tanylepis



- 1b.** Pollen present, usually abundant (10a-10b)

- 10a.** Lateral leaf-lobes narrowly linear, expanded or even forked near the apex. Sand-dunes, scarce (11a-11b).

- 11a.** Capitulum > 30 mm in diameter when fully open; achene body dark red, 3.5 mm **T. commixtum**



- 11b.** Capitulum < 30 mm in diameter when fully open; achene body dark purple, <3.0 mm **T. dunense**



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10b. If lateral leaf-lobes linear, then not expanded at apex (12a-12b)

12a. Styles yellow, same colour as ligules in fresh and dried condition; leaves narrowly lanceolate, multilobate; exterior bracts <7 mm, ovate, pale-bordered. Northern dunes. (13a-13b)

13a. Ligule stripe reddish; ripe achenes dark purple

T. haworthianum

(*T. gotlandicum*, which has been recorded from a single location on inland limestone in north-east Scotland is similar but with dark red achenes)



13b. Ligule stripe pale silver-grey, or absent; ripe achenes dark red

T. limbatum



12b. Styles discoloured, darker than ligules in fresh and dried condition; leaves various but usually oblanceolate in outline, deeply dissected into 3-5 lobes. Includes widespread and common species (14a-14b)

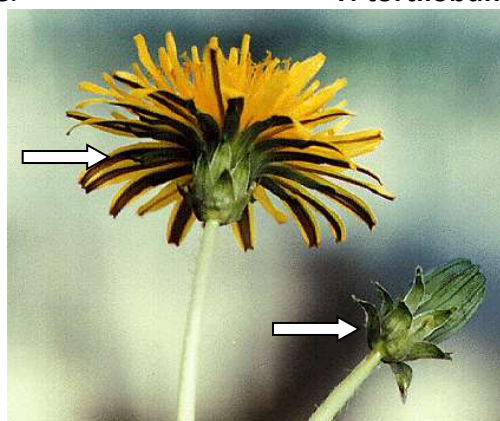
- 14a.** Ligules short, striped purple, scarcely exceeding inner bracts; exterior bracts recurved, suffused purple at least at apex. Widespread, dunes, heaths **T. brachyglossum**



- 14b.** Ligules \pm twice length of exterior bracts; exterior bracts erect to recurved, not purplish above (15a-15b)

- 15a.** Distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes expanded at the base; exterior bracts spreading, recurved at the apex, pruinose (16a-16b)

- 16a.** Leaves highly contorted; styles dark yellow, drying blackish; ligule stripes purple-brown; mature achenes pale brown. Sand-dunes in the south-east, rare. **T. tortilobum**



- 16b.** Leaves crisped at interlobes but not contorted; styles dark yellow, drying discoloured; ligule stripes pinkish-grey; mature achenes chestnut-red. Widespread and frequent **T. lacistophyllum**



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15b. Distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes not expanded at base; exterior bracts rarely strongly pruinose (17a-17b)

17a. Petioles narrow, unwinged, brilliant vinous-purple below; outer exterior bracts rounded-cordate at base, conspicuously bordered; ligule stripes grey-brown (widespread and common) **T. oxoniense**



17b. Petioles otherwise; ligule stripes not grey-brown (18a-18b)

18a. Exterior bracts with a conspicuous white or rose-coloured border, but not ovate-cordate at base; ligule teeth yellow (19a-19b)

19a. Exterior bracts narrow, recurved; petioles white

T. wallonicum



19b. Exterior bracts erect to spreading; petioles suffused purple (20a-20b)

20a. Lateral leaf-lobes arcuate-recurved; exterior bracts erect; achenes dark red when mature. Mostly sand-dunes **T. arenastrum**



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20b. Lateral leaf-lobes narrowly triangular; exterior bracts recurved distally; achenes grey-brown when mature. South-west and Ireland
T. degelii



18b. Exterior bracts unbordered or nearly so; ligule teeth often coloured darker than ligule; petioles various (21a-21b)

21a. Styles yellow in fresh and dried conditions; exterior bracts ovate, spreading, pruinose

T. proximiforme



21b. Styles discoloured at least when dry; exterior bracts lanceolate, recurved (22a-22b)

22a. Ligules striped dark purple; apex of inner ligules red; interlobes suffused blackish. Widespread, but uncommon
T. scoticum



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22b. Ligules with paler stripes; interlobes green (localised and rare in southern England) (23a-23b)

23a. Involucres narrow, cone-like; exterior bracts narrowly lanceolate, spreading distally; petioles green.
Rare, heathy grassland, S. England **T. retzii**



23b. Exterior bracts recurved at apex; petioles purplish (24a-24c)

24a. Terminal lobe linear, sometimes expanded at apex, bearing a single pair of basal lobules; ligule stripes pale reddish; achenes chestnut when ripe. Breckland **T. scanicum**



24b. Terminal lobe sagittate, acute, scarcely dentate; ligule stripes grey-violet; achenes pale brown.
Chalk grassland, southern England **T. acutum**



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Note: A close relative of *T. acutum*, but with bright red achenes, *T. isophyllum*, has been found at Ickworth, Suffolk where it is probably native.



T. isophyllum

24c. Leaf-lobes 2-3 pairs, dentate; exterior bracts narrow, recurved; stigmas dark, drying blackish; achenes bright chestnut, with large spines. Introduced, lawns in southern England. **T. disseminatum**

