

Cornfield Flowers Project



Species Cards - Recording & Rarity

Recording

Thorough recording of plant locations is crucial for identifying rare species at risk and informing conservation efforts in a local and national context. The essence of the Cornfield Flowers Project is based on such data, whether nationally in the form of the *Red Data List* and *Plant Atlas*, or locally from the published works and knowledge of north-east Yorkshire botanists.



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National scheme and vice-counties

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) is the leading organisation that studies UK plant distribution and taxonomy, and operates a recording and mapping scheme that informs national plant Atlases and County Floras.

To aid the national recording process, a system of Vice-counties (vc) was created in the 1870s to subdivide Britain into 113 roughly equal-sized units. These units remain unaltered to this day, allowing historical comparison of changes over time within the same defined area.

Our project area (see map) incorporates parts of vc61 and vc62 (South-east Yorkshire and North-east Yorkshire respectively), and all our records have been provided to the relevant BSBI recorders for these localities.

Native or introduced?

Because much conservation targeting is based on species rarity, clear distinctions need to be drawn between native plants and those reintroduced by the project, so as not to impair wider conservation efforts or devalue any species by misrepresenting its true status.

By sharing our data with local recorders, a permanent record of this information will remain in the public realm beyond the life of the project. Every species card also includes an at-a-glance map of our north-east Yorkshire area, showing each plant's local distribution and introduced status if relevant.

Our appreciation goes to the North-East Yorkshire Botany Group for the production of these maps.

Plant rarity

The result of the above recording effort is the data necessary to judge whether a plant is secure or declining, and if so at what rate. *The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain* (2006) designates all UK wildflowers based on this information, and makes an assessment of their rarity and the risks they face. These designations are provided on each card beneath the plant name, in the following order:

Extinct; Extinct in the Wild; Critically Endangered; Endangered; Vulnerable; Near Threatened; Least Concern

Of all the UK plants that achieve the rarest designations, 60% are cornfield flowers, highlighting the extreme threat this suite of plants faces, and the reason the Cornfield Flowers Project came into being.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)

This is the UK Government's action plan to address biodiversity loss, comprising specific conservation plans for the most threatened species (**Priority Species**) and habitats.

A number of cornfield flowers feature as Priority Species due to their rarity or rapid rate of decline, and are indicated as such in the initial species text.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

LBAPs are a further translation of the UKBAP scheme, reduced to a defined sub-regional area. They identify at-risk habitats and species in a local context, and can include additional species not included at the UK level. The majority of non-arable species that the project helps conserve feature in local BAPs.

A few of the rarest species we work with (top to bottom):
Corncockle, *Probably Extinct in Wild*; Red hemp-nettle, *Critically Endangered*; Corn buttercup, *Critically Endangered*;
Shepherd's-needle, *Critically Endangered*.

The Cornfield Flowers Project is spearheaded by the Carstairs Countryside Trust, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire Moors Association and North York Moors National Park Authority. It has a demonstration field and nursery at Ryedale Folk Museum and a working arable field at Silpho, near Scarborough. It is supported by the North York Moors National Park Sustainable Development Fund, North York Moors Coast & Hills LEADER Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

