



**Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire**

# LEARNING ABOUT PLANTS

A brief guide to help those living within the Wildlife Trust area with an interest in vascular plants to develop their skills by attending courses, joining societies & groups, attending field meetings and teaching themselves.

## WORKSHOPS & COURSES

The following organisations run workshops and short courses in plant identification, plant habitat studies and plant recording, amongst other subjects:

### **The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire**

Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE Tel: 01604 774031 Fax: 01604 784835  
trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org <http://www.wildlifebcn.org/trainingworkshops>

### **Cambridge University Botanic Garden**

The Education Office, Cambridge University Botanic Garden, 1 Brookside, Cambridge, CB2 1JE Tel: 01223 331875, General Enquiries: 01223 336265 education@botanic.cam.ac.uk  
<http://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk>

### **Field Studies Council**

Head office, Preston Montford, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury, SY4 1HW Tel: 01743 852100  
Fax: 01743 852101 enquiries@field-studies-council.org These courses are residential and based at centres around the country. <http://www.field-studies-council.org>

### **Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland** (see organisation details below)

The BSBI runs an on-line Plant Identification Course for beginners in serious botany, with a concessionary rate for volunteers. See <http://identiplant.co.uk/plant2015wp/> for more details.

A number of other centres and organisations round the country run courses on similar subjects.

## SOCIETIES & GROUPS

The following organisations arrange field meetings and/or some indoor lectures about British plants which are open to members and visitors/non-members and where informal learning can take place:

### **Bedfordshire Natural History Society**

Hon. Membership Secretary Mary Sheridan, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7TR  
01525 378245 membership@bnhs.org.uk <http://www.bnhs.org.uk/>

### **Huntingdonshire Fauna & Flora Society**

Hon. Membership Secretary Stuart Irons, 4 Appleyard, Stanground, Peterborough, PE2 8JH  
nebria@ntlworld.com <http://www.shotbolt.com/hffs/index.htm>

### **Cambridge Natural History Society**

Membership Secretary, Hilary Pounsett, 78 Stanley Road, Cambridge, CB5 8LB  
membership@cnhs.org.uk <http://www.cnhs.org.uk/>

### **Kettering and District Natural History Society**

<http://kdnhs.org.uk/Kettering-And-District-Natural-History-Society/>

### **Northamptonshire Natural History Society**

The Humfrey Rooms, 10 Castilian Terrace, Northampton, NN1 1LD 01604 602242  
<http://www.nnhs.info/index.php>

### **The Wild Flower Society**

The Wildflower Society Membership Secretary, 43 Roebuck Road, Rochester, ME1 1UE  
wildflowermembership@yahoo.co.uk <http://www.thewildflowersociety.com/>

**Friends of Cambridge University Botanic Garden**

The Friends' Office, Cambridge University Botanic Garden, 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE  
Tel/Fax: 01223 336271 friends@botanic.cam.ac.uk [Friends page](#)

**University of the Third Age in Cambridge - Botany Group**

First Floor, 27-28 Bridge Street, Cambridge, CB2 1UJ 01223 321587 (office open 10am-2pm, Mon-Fri). To attend lectures and field trips you need to join U3AC and therefore no longer be in full-time employment. Botany Group queries to: Dr Pam Newman pamelanewman77@yahoo.co.uk  
General U3AC e-mail: office@u3ac.org.uk <http://www.u3ac.org.uk/>

**Bedfordshire Flora Group**

This is a group of keen amateurs who are working to provide data for a national atlas to be published by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland in 2020. They are hoping to recruit new members with any level of experience, the only prerequisite being enthusiasm. Instruction and encouragement will be given. Details from vice-county recorder John Wakeley (contact details below).

**Cambridgeshire Flora Group**

An informal group actively recording the flora of the old county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. Monthly excursions usually at the weekend, April to Sept/Oct, to record plants in sites all over old Cambs; also many other opportunities and ways to contribute to the production of the new county flora and the national atlas. Contact vice-county recorders (details below).

**Fenland Flora**

Fieldwork is ongoing to produce a flora of the Fenland basin across several counties/vice-counties. Organisers are Owen Mountford and Jon Graham: om@ceh.ac.uk jonathan.graham@ntlworld.com  
<https://bsbi.org/fenland>

**Northamptonshire Flora Group**

In 2013 this group published an update to the 1995 flora. They are currently recording for the New Atlas with the intention of covering the whole of the vice-county by 2020. Organised by the BSBI vice-county recorder.  
Additionally, there is the East Northants and Soke of Peterborough Group which covers the north-east of the vice-county. Contact is Alyson Freeman alysonfreeman0@gmail.com

**PLANT RECORDING****Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI)**

Membership is open to all with an interest in the British and Irish vascular plant and stonewort floras. The Society organises a programme of excursions every year, a number specifically for beginners. The Society's website provides a wide and increasing range of useful botanical resources including a distribution mapping section. The Society also provides a network of referees to deal with members' queries regarding identification of difficult plant groups and other subjects. Members of the society benefit from substantial discounts on many botanical books, esp. at pre-publication stage.

<https://bsbi.org/>

The vice-county recorders receive, verify and collate plant records for their respective areas; submit records to national recording schemes; and endeavour to co-ordinate plant recording in their area.

**Cambridgeshire (excluding Hunts) vc 29:** Jonathan Shanklin, 11 City Road, Cambridge CB1 1DP  
jdsh@bas.ac.uk and Alan Leslie, 109 York Street, Cambridge, CB1 2PZ  
See also the recorders' webpage at <https://legacy.bas.ac.uk/met/jds/cnhs/vc29.htm>

**Bedfordshire vc 30:** John Wakeley, Green End Cottage, Green End, Maulden, Bedford, MK45 2AB  
vetjw@btinternet.com or flora@bnhs.org.uk

**Huntingdonshire vc 31:** David Broughton, 1 Margate, Woodlesford, Leeds, LS26 8PB  
da\_broughton@tiscali.co.uk <https://bsbi.org/huntingdonshire>

**Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough vc 32:**  
<https://bsbi.org/northamptonshire>

## INFORMATION RESOURCES - BOOKS & JOURNALS

**National identification guides with illustrations** (a small selection of some of the better amongst the very many available)

*Harrap's wildflowers: A field guide to the wild flowers of Britain & Ireland.* Simon Harrap. 2013.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 416 pp., 215×140 mm. Photographic guide covering over 900 species.

*Collins complete British wild flowers.* Paul Sterry 2006. (2008 reissue: *Collins complete guide to British wild flowers.*) HarperCollins Publishers, London. 304 pp., 210×135 mm. A photographic guide to over 1100 species, includes most grasses, sedges & rushes.

*Collins flower guide.* David Streeter, 2009 (HB), 2010 (PB). HarperCollins Publishers. 704 pp., 195×135 mm (PB). A colour illustrated book covering over 1900 species. Keys to the species of larger genera.

*The Wild Flower Key.* Francis Rose & Clare O'Reilly. Frederick Warne (Publishers) Ltd, London. First published 1981, Revised edition 2006. 576 pp., 190×130 mm. An illustrated guide with keys to most groups; includes some 1600 species. Includes only a few common grasses, sedges and rushes. NB.

The revised edition contained a large number of printing errors; errata can be found on the BSBI website publications page.

*Wild flowers of Britain and Ireland.* Marjorie Blamey, Richard Fitter, Alastair Fitter. 2013. 2nd ed.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 482 pp., 216×138 mm. A colour illustrated book covering over 1900 species.

Includes distribution maps. Not to be confused with the same authors' 1996 *Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe* published by HarperCollins.

**A useful review of illustrated guides recommended for beginners by Philip Oswald (U3A Cambridge) can be found here:** [https://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/Taxon\\_Field\\_guides\\_-Oswald-.pdf](https://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Taxon_Field_guides_-Oswald-.pdf)

### National identification guides largely un-illustrated

*New Flora of the British Isles*, 3rd Edn. Clive Stace. Cambridge University Press, 2010

*Flora of the British Isles.* A.R.Clapham, T.G.Tutin & D.M.Moore. (1987). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [currently out of print] (earlier editions: A.R.Clapham, T.G.Tutin & E.F.Warburg. 1952, 1962). For native vascular plants, each has its strengths and weaknesses. Both have detailed keys, neither has any colour pictures, and few black and white drawings (both) or photographs (Stace only).

Stace is much more up-to-date (indeed, it has become a standard source for plant names) and incorporates the new molecular system of classification based on DNA analysis; he tackles certain 'difficult' groups better than any previous single volume book, often with new illustrations; he is never afraid to use small features (even those requiring a microscope) if these are the most reliable. 'CTM' (alias 'CTW') provide more thorough descriptions, which can be very handy if parts of a plant (e.g. flowers, fruits) are missing (but see Vegetative Key below). Their keys often use easier characters and are more comfortably laid out. For non-native plants Stace has to be used because he includes over a thousand extra species, mainly casuals from food, gardens etc., and is far more reliable and up-to-date on the distribution and origins of aliens.

*Field Flora of the British Isles.* Clive Stace. Cambridge University Press, 1999. ISBN 0 521 65315 0

*Excursion Flora of the British Isles* 3rd Edn. A.R.Clapham, T.G.Tutin, E.F.Warburg. Cambridge University Press, 3rd edition first published 1981. ISBN 0 521 23290 2. These are pocket versions of the two volumes described above; in the case of Stace it is the 2nd Edition (1997) which has been condensed.

### Other guides

The BSBI publishes a range of more specialised books for the botanist, notably the Handbook series which covers groups such as Sedges & allies, Umbellifers, Docks & Knotweeds, Willows & Poplars, Crucifers, Roses, Pondweeds, Dandelions, Water-starworts, Fumitories and Grasses. BSBI also publishes the *Plant Crib*, a very useful book giving detailed guidance on identification of problem plant groups using descriptions, keys, tables and line drawings (also available as pdf from BSBI website).

*The Vegetative Key to the British Flora* J.Poland & E. Clements. BSBI/John Poland, Southampton, 2009. Radically different to most/all preceding floras; almost wholly composed of a hierarchy of different keys with many line drawings of small details such as leaf venation & shape, leaf/stem cross-sections, hair type/shape and also a small number of colour illustrations. Most of the keys are entirely artificial so completely unrelated plants can appear next to each other; there are also some 80 pages of keys devoted to various taxonomic groups. With this book many specimens that were formerly unnameable can now be determined with confidence.

### National distribution and ecology

*New Atlas of the British & Irish Flora*. C.D.Preston, D.A.Pearman, T.D.Dines. Oxford University Press, 2002 National distribution plotted at 10km square resolution; together with brief descriptions of the status of each species, their habitats, distribution/range, trends, etc. An accompanying CD allows data to be queried in a variety of ways, including comparison of species distribution with geophysical and climatic factors. See also BSBI website.

### Local distribution floras, checklists and rare plant registers

*Flora of Bedfordshire* C.R.Boon and A.R.Outen. Bedfordshire Natural History Society, 2011. A large format (3.5kg), full-colour flora with colour-coded tetrad dot maps for most species, allowing comparison with distributions recorded in earlier floras. Itemised records for scarcer species. Analyses of change, including re-survey of John Dony's Habitat Studies for his 1953 Flora. Many excellent photos and paintings of species. Also covers bryophytes. Out of print.

The most recent full flora of Cambridgeshire vc 29 is: *A Flora of Cambridgeshire* F.H.Perring, P.D.Sell, S.M.Walters and H.L.K.Whitehouse. Cambridge University Press, 1964.

*A Checklist of the Flora of Cambridgeshire*. G.Crompton & H.L.K.Whitehouse. Privately printed, 1983. With distribution lists at 10km square resolution.

*Cambridgeshire Flora Records since 1538*. Gigi Crompton. An on-line catalogue of vascular plant records in Cambridge and the Isle of Ely (vc 29): *Part 1* Nationally Rare, Nationally Scarce, Locally Rare species. *Part 2* Alien species. *Part 3* Other species. <http://www.cambridgeshireflora.com/>

The vice-county recorders' webpage provides a number of useful vice-county plant lists and a draft *Rare Plant Register*.

*The Flora of Northamptonshire & the Soke of Peterborough*. Gill Gent & Rob Wilson. Robert Wilson Designs, 2013. With descriptions of county climate, geology, soils, landscape etc. and a discussion of change and its causes in the local flora. Systematic flora with short species accounts of over 1800 species. Distribution of 600 species mapped at tetrad level with the 1995 5km square distribution also shown. The *Flora Checklist* and *Rare Plant Register* can be downloaded from the BSBI website county page: <https://bsbi.org/northamptonshire>

*The Flora of Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough*. Terry C.E.Wells. Published by Huntingdonshire Fauna & Flora Society and T.C.E.Wells, 2003. ISBN 0-9514427-2-4. Mainly comprising tetrad distribution maps with short species accounts. The majority of the recording effort was made prior to 1989. The very useful *Checklist of the Flora of Huntingdonshire (vc31)* and *Rare Plant Register* are available to download from the county page on the BSBI website.

<https://bsbi.org/huntingdonshire>

### Local journals on natural history

*Nature in Cambridgeshire*. An annual journal devoted to the natural history of the former county of Cambridgeshire; more recent editions have widened their scope to include some material relating to current administrative Cambridgeshire. It contains a digest of the year's most interesting and important plant records in vc29. Copies and back copies may be obtained by writing to Nature in Cambridgeshire, c/o Mark Hill, 11 Chaucer Road, Cambridge, CB2 7EB or [info@natureincambridgeshire.org.uk](mailto:info@natureincambridgeshire.org.uk). <http://www.natureincambridgeshire.org.uk/>

*Huntingdonshire Fauna & Flora Society Annual Report*. An annual journal containing reports from the society's recorders and articles on the natural history of the former county of Huntingdonshire together with Peterborough. The annual review of recent plant records covers Hunts only. Copies and back copies may be obtained from Hon. Membership Secretary Stuart Irons, 4 Appleyard, Stanground, Peterborough, PE2 8JH [nebria@ntlworld.com](mailto:nebria@ntlworld.com)

*Bedfordshire Naturalist*. An annual journal produced by Bedfordshire Natural History Society. Part 1 covers plants and fauna other than birds. The current issue may be obtained from the Hon. Membership Secretary, Mary Sheridan, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7TR Tel: 01525 378245