

The Great Plant Hunt

Identikit



Code of conduct

When studying habitats and the wildlife in them, children and adults are encouraged to consider and discuss appropriate ways of behaving. Drawing up a code of conduct is a useful class exercise before undertaking an activity.

It is not normally acceptable to pick or remove wild flowers from their habitat. However, the plants chosen for this project are all very common.

Health and safety information

The plants listed in the Identikit have been assessed and are not poisonous but any plant may cause an allergic reaction in sensitive individuals. Close supervision is recommended at all times. All cuts or open wounds should be covered with a plaster before you start plant hunting.

Children:

- Do not eat any plant material such as berries or seeds
- Avoid putting fingers in mouths – some plant material is poisonous
- Always wash your hands at the end of an activity
- Insects – particularly bees and wasps – may be around plants
- You should never pick wild flowers unless you have been told it is OK



wellcome trust

Kew
PLANTS PEOPLE
POSSIBILITIES

DARWIN200



Cleavers

- **Common names:**
Cleavers, clivers, goosegrass, stickyweed
- **Scientific name:**
Galium aparine

- **Flowering season:**
June to September
- **Fruiting season:**
Likely to fruit between July and November



Galium aparine

Description:

A bristly clinging plant with circles of leaves along the square-shaped stem.

There are lots of prickles all over the plant to help it stick.

Where it can be found:

Cleavers can be found clambering over other plants in hedges, woodland edges and waste ground.



Cleavers seedling



Cleavers plant in pathway habitat



Flowering head of cleavers



Cleavers seed

Germination: This plant sometimes might germinate better if chilled first and kept in contact with a wet surface.



Cleavers showing 'sticky' prickles



Cleavers in fruit

Seed dispersal:
Carried by animals



Uses:
Cleavers can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable.

Collecting cleavers

Fun facts:
Can be dried and roasted to make a drink – like coffee.

If you go out for a walk in the countryside you might come back with cleavers stems or fruits stuck to your clothes like velcro!



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Coltsfoot

- **Common names:**
Coltsfoot, coughwort
- **Scientific name:**
Tussilago farfara

- **Flowering season:**
February to April
- **Fruiting season:**
Likely to fruit between
April and June



Tussilago farfara

Description:

The flowers are similar to dandelions but the plant has small scaly leaves packed along purple stems. Big heart-shaped green leaves appear after the plant has finished flowering and fruiting.

Where it can be found:

This plant is very common in waste ground, and is also found along the sides of roads, near the sea and by rivers and streams.



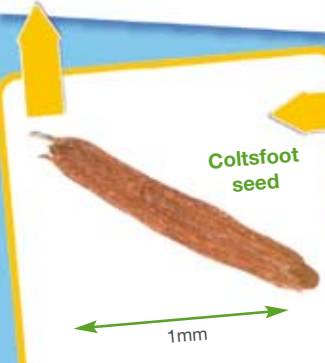
Coltsfoot seedling



Coltsfoot plants in habitat



Flowering heads of coltsfoot



Coltsfoot seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate and prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Basal leaves of coltsfoot after flowering and fruiting



Fruiting head of coltsfoot

Seed dispersal:

Carried by wind (parachute)

Uses:

Coltsfoot has been used as a natural food flavouring.

Coltsfoot's silky seeds were once used as a stuffing for mattresses.

Fun facts:

The name *Tussilago* means 'stopping a cough'.

The fruiting head looks like a dandelion 'clock'.



Daisy

- **Common names:**
Daisy, common daisy, lawn daisy, English daisy
- **Scientific name:**
Bellis perennis



Bellis perennis

- **Flowering season:**
March to October
- **Fruiting season:**
Daisy is likely to fruit between June and October

Description:

Daisy is a very short plant with a tightly packed group of leaves at the base and small white flower heads with a yellow centre.

Where it can be found:

This plant can be found throughout the UK and is often found in lawns, by roadsides and on the edges of paths.



Daisy seedling



Daisy bud



Flowering heads of daisy



Daisy seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).



Fruiting head of daisy



Daisy head losing florets

Seed dispersal:

Carried by a combination of wind, animals and rainwater. Seed also disperses unassisted – it just drops off

Uses:

In the past, daisy was used to treat bruises. It is not used for that any more.

Fun facts:

The flowers are often made into daisy chains. One of the longest was made in Austria and measured 4km.



Dandelion

- **Common names:**
Dandelion, lion's tooth, blowball
- **Scientific name:**
Taraxacum officinale

- **Flowering season:**
March to October
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between April and October



Taraxacum officinale

Description:

The yellow flower-like structure is made up of lots of little flowers. Each yellow petal-like structure is a flower. The seed head is a round ball of seeds each with its own parachute (dandelion clock).

Where it can be found:

Dandelion can be found throughout the UK and is often found in lawns, by roadsides and on the edges of paths.



Dandelion seedling



Dandelion bud



Dandelion in flower



Dandelion seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate and prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Fruiting head of dandelion showing seeds and parachutes



Unopened fruiting head of dandelion

Seed dispersal:

Carried by wind (parachute)

Uses:

Dandelion is used as a food. Young dandelion leaves make a good vegetable green, either cooked or in salads. The roots can be roasted and ground and used to make a drink.

Fun facts:

The English name dandelion comes from 'dent de lion' meaning 'lion's tooth', because of its coarsely-toothed leaves.



Elder

- **Common names:**
Elder, Judas tree, pipe tree, black elder
- **Scientific name:**
Sambucus nigra

- **Flowering season:**
May to July
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually produces fruit between September and October



Sambucus nigra

Description:

Elder is a shrub or tree with flat-topped clusters of tiny scented white flowers. After flowering, the dark purple fruits (berries) hang in large clusters. The leaves are made up of five leaflets.

Where it can be found:

Elder is widespread and very common. It is found in woods and on scrub or waste ground.



Elder seedling



Elder flower buds



Elder plant in habitat



2mm

Elder seed

Germination: These seeds are interesting to collect so that you can learn about their uses. They are very difficult to process and germinate.



Elder in fruit



Elder with flower open

Seed dispersal:

Carried by animals (birds)

Uses:

Elderberries are used to make wine and the flowers to make cordial and elderflower champagne.

Fun facts:

Elder stems can easily be hollowed out by removing the soft material inside. In the past, the hollowed-out stems were used to make whistles.



Garlic mustard

- **Common names:**
Garlic mustard, Jack by the hedge, poor man's mustard
- **Scientific name:**
Alliaria petiolata



Alliaria petiolata

- **Flowering season:**
April to July
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between June and November

Description:

Garlic mustard is a tall plant with heart shaped leaves and little white flowers with four petals. It smells strongly of garlic when crushed.

Where it can be found:

Garlic mustard is found in hedgerows or at the edge of woods and scrubland.



Garlic mustard seedling

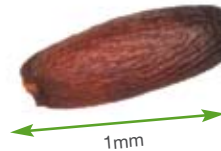


Mature garlic mustard plant



Flowering garlic mustard plant in habitat

Garlic mustard seed



Germination: This seed may be difficult to germinate but might germinate better if sown on a wetted tissue and chilled in the fridge for two to three months first. Afterwards, sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).

Uses:

When crushed, the leaves smell of garlic. Chopped leaves can be added to salads.



Garlic mustard plant in fruit



Flowering and fruiting head of garlic mustard

Seed dispersal:

Seed dispersal method unknown or uncertain

Fun facts:

The seeds were once used as a snuff to make you sneeze!

The caterpillars of the orange-tipped butterfly love to eat the young fruits of this plant.



Hawthorn

- **Common names:**
Hawthorn, May blossom, whitethorn
- **Scientific name:**
Crataegus monogyna

- **Flowering season:**
May to June
- **Fruiting season:**
Likely to fruit between September and November



Crataegus monogyna

Description:

This small tree or shrub has long sharp thorns and pretty white flowers with five petals. The fruits are dark red and fleshy like a rose hip.

Where it can be found:

The plant is often found in hedgerows, at the edge of woods or in scrubland.



Hawthorn seedlings



Mature hawthorn in flower



Flowering heads of hawthorn



Hawthorn seed

Germination: These seeds are interesting to collect so that you can learn about their uses, but are very difficult to process and germinate.



Hawthorn showing mature fruit



Hawthorn showing early fruit

Seed dispersal:
Carried by animals

Uses:

Hawthorn can be used as a hedge, and is often used to line farmers' fields.

Fun facts:

The flowers are traditionally used as decoration on festivals like 'May Day' in the UK, where some people celebrate by dancing around the maypole.



Mallow

- **Common names:**
Mallow, high mallow, pancake plant, cheese flower
- **Scientific name:**
Malva sylvestris



Malva sylvestris

- **Flowering season:**
June to September
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between July and October

Description:

This is quite a tall bushy plant. The bright pink flowers are made up of five narrow dark veined petals. The leaves on the stem are ivy shaped. The fruits are round and flattish.

Where it can be found:

Mallow is found on waste ground, roadside verges and sometimes in fields.



Mallow seedlings



Mallow flower bud opening



Mallow showing full flower and buds

Mallow seed



Germination: This seed needs help to germinate. The tough seed coat must be damaged to allow the seed to take up water. In nature this might happen when the seeds are eaten by an animal. In the lab they would be rubbed with sandpaper. Afterwards, sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).

Uses:

Young mallow shoots used to be eaten as a vegetable up to Roman times.



Fruiting head of mallow in roadside habitat



Mallow in field habitat

Seed dispersal:

Seed dispersal method unknown or uncertain

Fun facts:

Nearly all the folk names from the past for this plant are to do with the round shape of the fruit – for example pancake plant and cheese flower.



Mugwort

- **Common names:**
Mugwort, wild wormwood
- **Scientific name:**
Artemisia vulgaris

- **Flowering season:**
July to September
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between September and early November



Artemisia vulgaris

Description:

Mugwort is a tall upright plant. The leaves have lots of white hairs underneath but are dark green with no hairs on the top. The tall spikes of flowers are not very pretty. The tiny flowers can be yellowish-brown or purple.

Where it can be found:

Mugwort is a very common plant growing in rough and uncultivated places, such as waste ground and roadsides.



Mugwort seedling



Mugwort in bud



Mature mugwort plant in flower



Mugwort seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate but prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Mugwort in fruit



Flowering head of mugwort

Seed dispersal:

Seed dispersal method unknown or uncertain

Uses:

Mugwort used to be used to flavour drinks.

Fun facts:

Mugwort was thought to have magical properties to protect travellers from exhaustion. The Romans planted it by roads for passers-by to pick and put in their shoes, hoping it would relieve their feet.



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Plantain

Common names:

Ribwort plantain, Englishman's foot or white man's foot, black jack, cocks and hens, fighting cocks, swords and spears.

Scientific name:

Plantago lanceolata

Flowering season:

April to October

Fruiting season:

This plant usually fruits between May and November



Plantago lanceolata

Description:

The leaves are quite long and narrow, strongly veined and covered in silky hairs. The flowers are pale greenish-yellow or pale brown and are packed together to make an oval flower head.

Where it can be found:

Plantain can be found on waste ground and in well-trodden places like paths and lawns.



Plantain seedling



Plantain in waste ground habitat



Showing whole plantain plant



Germination:

This seed should germinate easily but needs light to germinate. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Fruiting head of plantain



Flowering head of plantain

Seed dispersal:

Carried by animals (sticking like dust), and wind as they are very small

Uses:

Saxons bound it to their heads to try and treat headaches, but it's not used for this now!

Fun facts:

Plantain has over sixty different common names!



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Red clover

- **Common names:**
Red clover, meadow clover, wild clover
- **Scientific name:**
Trifolium pratense

- **Flowering season:**
May to September
- **Fruiting season:**
Likely to fruit between June and October



Trifolium pratense

Description:

This plant grows low down in the grass. The flowers are red or reddish purple in small tight round heads. The leaves are a made up of three leaflets often marked with a whitish crescent.

Where it can be found:

Red clover is found in grasslands, waysides and waste ground.



Red clover seedlings



Red clover plant with leaves showing white crescent markings



Red clover flowering head

Red clover seed



1mm

Germination: This seed needs help to germinate. The tough seed coat must be damaged to allow the seed to take up water. In nature this might happen when the seeds are eaten. In the lab they would be rubbed with sandpaper. Afterwards, sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).

Fun facts:

If a rare four-leaved clover is found it is supposed to bring the owner good luck.



Red clover in fruit



Red clover flowering heads some turning into fruiting heads

Seed dispersal: Carried by animals and also disperses unassisted – it just drops off

Uses:

If red clover is grown in a field it can help fertilise the soil, making it better for growing crops – in the same way as adding manure.



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Self heal

- **Common names:**
Self heal, hook heal, sickly wort, carpenter wort
- **Scientific name:**
Prunella vulgaris



Prunella vulgaris

- **Flowering season:**
June to October
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between June and November

Description:

The plant is covered in fine hairs. The flowers are purple and closely packed, forming square heads. The leaves are stalked, oval and appear in opposite pairs.

Where it can be found:

Self heal is found in grasslands, waste ground and in woodland in open spaces.



Self heal seedling



Self heal in bud



Self heal in flower



Self heal seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate but prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Fruiting head of self heal



Mature self heal plant in habitat

Seed dispersal:

Seed dispersal method unknown or uncertain

Uses:

The common name self heal suggests that in the past people believed this plant could treat illness or injury. It was often used on wounds. It is not used for this today.

Fun facts:

Self heal leaves can be eaten in salad, although they taste a bit bitter.

Self heal is related to mint.



Shepherd's purse

Common names:

Shepherd's purse, lady's purse, pickpocket, shepherd's heart, pepper and salt

Scientific name:

Capsella bursa-pastoris

Flowering season:

Almost all year

Fruiting season:

It is best to collect fruits between May and October



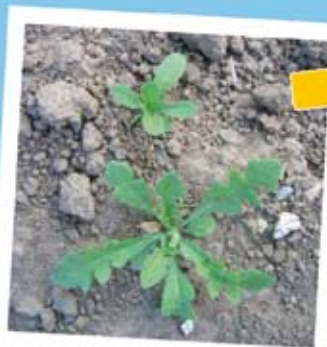
Capsella bursa-pastoris

Description:

Shepherd's purse is a small plant with arrow-shaped leaves on the stem, little groups of leaves near the bottom of the plant, four-petalled white flowers and little heart-shaped fruits.

Where it can be found:

Shepherd's purse is found on waste and cultivated ground everywhere.



Shepherd's purse seedlings



Shepherd's purse in roadside habitat



Shepherd's purse flowering head



Shepherd's purse seed

Germination: This seed may be difficult to germinate but might germinate better if sown on a wetted tissue and chilled in the fridge for two to three months first. Afterwards, sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).



Shepherd's purse in fruit



Shepherd's purse spike in flower and fruit

Seed dispersal:

Eaten and regurgitated by animals

Uses:

Shepherd's purse can be used for flavouring soup.

Fun facts:

If sprinkled on water where mosquitoes are breeding, the seed is helpful in keeping numbers down.




Silver birch

- **Common names:**
Silver birch
- **Scientific name:**
Betula pendula

- **Flowering season:**
April to May
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually produces fruit between August and September



Betula pendula



Description:
Silver birch is a tall slender tree with silvery-white bark. The leaves are oval and pointed at the tip.

The flowers appear in catkins – male ones and female ones.

Where it can be found:
The tree can often be found in woods and on sandy heaths and moors.



Silver birch seedling



Young silver birch



Mature silver birch tree



Silver birch seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate but prefers warmer temperatures. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).



Silver birch in fruit



Silver birch catkins

Seed dispersal: Carried by wind (has a winged shape), and possibly also by animals

Uses:
Silver birch has an attractive trunk, and is often seen in gardens and parks.

Fun facts:
The twigs are often gathered and made into besom

brooms – the ones that witches have in stories.

In the past, birch sap was made into beer, flavoured with honey, cloves and lemon peel. It is still used to make silver birch wine.



Sorrel

- **Common names:**
Sorrel, common sorrel, spinach sorrel
- **Scientific name:**
Rumex acetosa

- **Flowering season:**
May to July
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between June and August



Rumex acetosa

Description:

The leaves are spear or arrow shaped and clasp the stem. The flowers are rounded and tiny. They are reddish to greenish brown and grow in clusters along branched spikes.

Where it can be found:

Found in grassland, roadside verges, and waste ground.



Sorrel seedling



Sorrel in bud



Mature sorrel plant in habitat



1mm

Sorrel seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate but prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Fruiting heads of sorrel



Flowering heads of sorrel

Seed dispersal:

Carried by wind (winged)

Uses:

The leaves can be used in salads and to flavour sauces and soups.

The juice of the plant can be used to remove ink or iron stains from linen.

Fun facts:

The name *Rumex* comes from the Latin word meaning 'to suck' (*rumo*), as Romans used to suck the leaves to stop them feeling thirsty.



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Spear thistle

- **Common names:**
Spear thistle, common thistle, bell thistle, Scotch thistle
- **Scientific name:**
Cirsium vulgare

- **Flowering season:**
July to October
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually produces fruit between July and October



Cirsium vulgare

Description:

The stems of this tall plant have spiny wings. The leaves are spear shaped, lobed and spiny. The globe-like purple flower head is made up of lots of little flowers (florets). Each fruit contains one seed with a parachute of soft feathery hairs.

Where it can be found:

Spear thistle can be found in fields, verges, gardens and waste ground.



Spear thistle seedling



Spear thistle leaves



Unopened bud of spear thistle



1mm

Spear thistle seed

Germination: This seed germinates easily but prefers light for germination. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface.



Spear thistle in fruit



Mature spear thistle with flower

Seed dispersal:

Carried by wind (parachute)

Uses:

The downy seed head makes excellent tinder for a fire - it is easily lit by a spark.

Fun facts:

This is probably the true Scots thistle, the flower of Scotland.

It is said that it prevented a night attack by the Danes in the Battle of Largs in Scotland because the enemy cried out loudly in pain as they stepped on thistles while moving around. Ouch!



White campion

Common names:

White campion, cow-rattle, cockle, cuckoo flower, thunder flower, white bachelors' button, white robin.

Scientific name:

Silene latifolia

Flowering season:

May to October

Fruiting season:

This plant usually produces fruit between May and October



Silene latifolia
(used to be called *Silene alba*)

Description:

The leaves are paired, spear shaped and hairy, the stems are hairy too. The white flowers are made up of five petals which are deeply lobed.

Where it can be found:

White campion can be found on field edges, hedge banks, road verges and disturbed ground.



White campion seedling



White campion in flower and bud



White campion in flower



1mm

White campion seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).



White campion fruiting head



White campion in a field edge habitat

Seed dispersal:

Carried by wind, or rolls along

Uses:

The roots of this plant used to be made into soap to wash clothes.

Fun facts:

The plant produces a scent at night because unlike many wild flowers they remain open as it becomes dark at night. The scent attracts moths which pollinate the flowers.



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White deadnettle

- **Common names:**
White deadnettle, bee nettle
- **Scientific name:**
Lamium album

- **Flowering season:**
May to December
- **Fruiting season:**
This plant usually fruits between May and December



Lamium album

Description:

White deadnettle stems have a square shape. The leaves are heart-shaped and wrinkled. They are found in pairs either side of the stem. The flowers are white and have a hooded top which makes them look a little like tiny slippers.

Where it can be found:

Hedgerows roadside verges and waste grounds.



White deadnettle seedling



White deadnettle plant



White deadnettle with buds and open flowers



1mm

White deadnettle seed

Germination: This seed may be difficult to germinate but might germinate better if sown on a wetted tissue and chilled in the fridge for two to three months first. Afterwards, sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).

Uses:

White deadnettle is used to make herbal tea and can be boiled and eaten like spinach.



White deadnettle in fruit



Mature white deadnettle plant

Seed dispersal:

Carried by animals (ants)

Fun facts:

Children can make whistles from the square stems by hollowing out the middle.

Although it looks a lot like an ordinary nettle, it doesn't sting – so it is called deadnettle.



Yarrow

Common names:

Yarrow, milfoil, field hops, hundred leaved grass, soldier's woundwort

Scientific name:

Achillea millefolium

Flowering season:

June to November

Fruiting season:

This plant usually fruits between July and November



Achillea millefolium

Description:

Yarrow is a tall, hairy plant with feathery leaves. The flat white or pinkish flowering parts at the top of the plant are made up of lots of little flowers packed together.

Where it can be found:

Yarrow is commonly found in dry grassland, hedge banks, at the edge of woods, waste ground, roadsides and untended lawns or village greens.



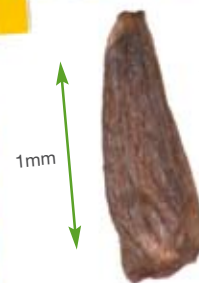
Yarrow seedling



Young yarrow plant showing leaves



Yarrow flowering head in bud



Yarrow seed

Germination: This seed is easy to germinate. Sow in a pot of soil or compost on the surface and cover seeds very lightly with a thin layer of soil (2-5mm).



Fruiting head of yarrow



Many flowering heads of yarrow

Seed dispersal:
Carried by wind

Uses:

Young plants often used to be eaten like spinach. If planted near crops, yarrow helps to keep harmful insects away.

Fun facts:

The Latin name *millefolium* means 'thousand leaves' – describing the very many parts of the feathery leaves.

