

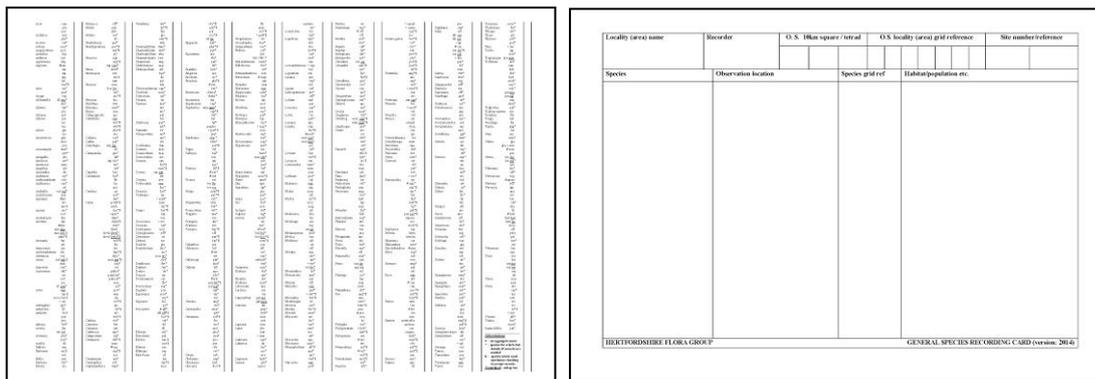


HERTS FLORA GROUP

Newsletter No. 24: April 2014



New flora recording card



As the stock of old recording cards from the Herts Flora Project finally ran out, I had to produce a revised version. Several people who had tried to use the downloadable recording form for Herts on the BSBI's website had reported that it wasn't entirely useful, with various things missing, and some odd things included! So, I re-visited the species list on our previous survey card, and updated names to match those in Stace's *New flora of the British Isles* (ed. 3) (2010). This time I made sure Betony and the Broomrapes were included! In addition, I have added a number of aliens that have turned out to be more widespread than previously thought, and are therefore found more frequently. Also, I have added a couple of very common brambles that occur widely and are readily recognised once you know how! The total number of species is about 920.

As the names being used are those in Stace's 3rd ed., those who have got a copy of this vital book will know that quite a few well-known species have had name changes, because of new DNA studies. So, you may find the new card a bit puzzling until you realise that, for example, Meadow Fescue is now *Schedonorus pratensis*; Bristly Ox-tongue is *Helminthotheca echioides*; Salad Burnet is back to *Poterium sanguisorba* and Lesser Celandine is back to what the Victorians called it – *Ficaria verna* (with the bulbil subspecies being ssp. *verna*, not *fertilis*, as you might surmise!).

I aim to make the PDF of this available on the Herts Flora Group pages of the Herts NHS website (<http://www.hnhs.org/flora/>), so people can download and print it out. In the meantime, I am sending out a copy of the PDF for you to use, and will also get a small stock of cards printed for those that want a hard copy (contact me for these). When you use the PDF, you may need to adjust the printing setup on your computer system to adjust to the narrow borders (the narrower these are, the bigger the typeface for species names will be!).

Using the new recording card

At the bottom right-hand corner of the species list, you will find a box with some brief notes defining symbols used in the list. As with the Herts Flora Survey card, the aim of these is to alert people to take care when recording a species!

- #: signifies that the name here is actually an 'aggregate' (or 'sensu lato', for those that know the Latin). In other words it encompasses two or more actual species or subspecies, which

may also be on the card. **If what you are recording is not the aggregate, use the correct species tag instead.**

- *: is used to highlight less common species, or those for which I would like more detailed information about where they were found (e.g. a 6- or 8-figure grid reference, notes on habitat etc.). These details can be entered on the back of the card.
- \$: is used to identify where people really do need to check out (or get checked) a specimen to confirm a record. In general, **if you think you have one of these, I might ask you to send me a voucher specimen (or at the very least a good photo), to prove it, unless I know you have recorded it before.** Even then, in some cases, collecting and sending in a specimen is a good idea, which I can make a permanent voucher for the County Herbarium at North Herts Museums in Hitchin.

I have also underlined name abbreviations that represent subspecies. In some cases, there may be two different subspecies for a species, as well as a general species abbreviation (e.g. *Arctium minus*). Take care which you use. In this case, you can't name a subspecies unless you find flowers or fruits.

Finally, I have again given a blank column on the right hand side of species abbreviations. This is to record species-specific tags or notes when you haven't otherwise put notes on the other side of the card (e.g. 'P' for 'planted').

The cards can be used either to record a tetrad or a site (or just odds and ends, if you like). **It is essential that at least a tetrad reference is given**, preferably a minimum of a 1km square if you are not doing 'tetrad-bashing'. If you use the card to record a site, you can give a centroid grid reference for small sites, but for large ones, do be more specific. So, for example, it is essential, when recording Therfield Heath or Ashridge (Aldbury Common etc.), to be precise where you are – because the site straddles not only tetrad boundaries but 10km square boundaries! Unlocalised records in places like this are next to useless.

Please use these cards for recording preferably on one day only. If you do use one to record, say, species in and around where you live, then only include records from, at the most, a single year on any one card. The aim is for records to be as precise about the 'what', where, when, and who' of a record that is possible, so this is important.

BSBI National Atlas 2020 recording progress

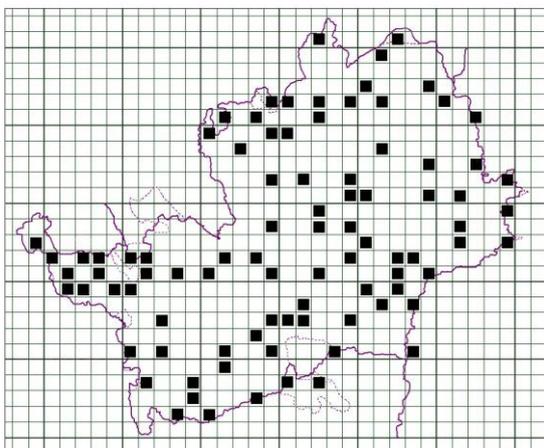
Last year I asked people to give me some commitment to help with recording for the BSBI's planned re-recording of the national Atlas (the last of these, in 2002, having been based on tetrad data collected by our members between 1987 and 1999).

Unfortunately, I was not overwhelmed by kind offers to take on squares! And for those that did, I have only so far received rather few actual returns of records. So, if you have done some recording, do submit your records, either online (see below), or on cards etc. to me. And, **if you have not yet committed to doing any concerted recording, it is not too late to do so!** I would be delighted to get some help (and can re-supply the plan of action I sent out last year, if you have lost it!).

However, progress on recording is not as bad as that might seem. Fortunately, some of the single-site recording carried out under the auspices of the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust's 'Wildlife Site Survey' project has supplied me with useful data, although very often the smaller sites tend only to record the same fairly limited flora, and therefore can miss out a whole range of species that otherwise need recording as well.

Below is, first, a map that shows all the 'desired tetrads' for re-survey; followed by another map that gives an indication of how well we are doing at the moment overall. For the latter, I have also added

in the effect of Wildlife Site Surveys, to give an idea of their coverage – but remember – these only record **some** species, not all in any one tetrad.



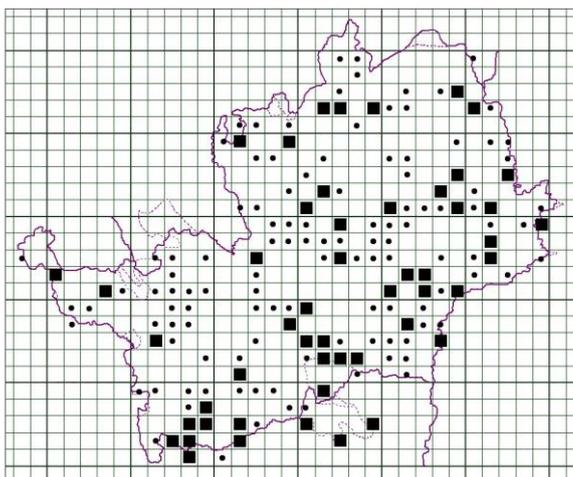
Map 1. 'Desired' full-tetrad recording coverage in Herts for Atlas 2020 survey.

This level of coverage would give 'adequate' coverage of most species in the County (with added 'sites' to cover rare species in other areas)

Map 2. Actual 'recent' (post-2005) flora recording coverage in Herts.

Black squares: denote 'reasonably complete' (but not thorough) coverage of whole tetrads, looking at 'all' potential habitats in the tetrad.

Black dots: denote single site surveys, covering a limited range of species (mostly from 'Wildlife Site Survey' recording).



Three things stand out from this:

1. Not all the 'reasonably well-covered' tetrads are actually the same as those selected for recording! This is mainly because some people have done some good recording in 'other' squares for various reasons; including some of the Flora Group field days.
2. The single-site Wildlife Site Surveys', although very well spread across the County, will fail to pick up much of the County's actual botanical diversity.
3. Some areas are much better covered at this stage than others, and so we could do with more attention paid to the 'less-favoured' areas.

The message from all this, therefore, is: if you haven't already done any/much fieldwork in your adopted areas, or haven't adopted one or more at all, then we could do with your help.

If you haven't sent in your records to me, one way or the other, also please do so a.s.a.p., so my backlog of data compilation towards the end of the Project is not overwhelming.

Herts Flora Online Recording

Uptake of online recording has also been a bit disappointing, although I note that a few more of you have begun to try it out recently. Keep it up. For those that haven't yet looked at it, the link is: <http://flora.hnhs.org/>

It also has the facility to download a spreadsheet template, into which you can type a list of records for a locality or day's recording. Don't forget to use the scientific names in Stace's 3rd edition *New flora of the British Isles*.

The system is now available via a link from the Herts Flora Group pages on the Herts NHS website (<http://www.hnhs.org/flora/>).

As I said in previous newsletters, to be able to use the system, you will need to set yourself up an 'account' on it. In order to do this, you have to sort out a user name and password. The latter in particular has to be 'robust' – i.e. has to include at least one numerical character, a mixture of upper and lower case letters, and at least one other symbol character, such as a full stop or question mark. These will need to be sent to me to set you up, though, because 'spam' was in danger of overloading the servers that operate the system!

It won't entirely replace my existing database, in the immediate future at least, not least because so much is already on the *Recorder 6* database I use. Unlike many vice-counties in Britain, I don't use a *MapMate* database, partly because *Recorder* can handle more sophisticated data, and is what the Herts ERC also uses, so I can more easily transfer data to them. Nevertheless, records submitted through the online system have the advantage that they will feed in to the UK BRC very rapidly once checked out, and will end up more quickly on the national distribution database.

Hertfordshire Flora Recording Login

Welcome back .

Welcome to the Hertfordshire Flora Group's Online Recording System

Using this system, you can either send us your one-off plant observations, or you can send us a spreadsheet of records made over a period of time. By using this, we hope to speed up the process of checking out and making use of your records, and to cut out some of the errors that can creep into the process.

To take part, you will have had to set up your own account on the system first.

Learn more...

Login to Hertfordshire Flora Recording

Username or e-mail:

Password:

[Request new password](#)

Latest Photos

Anemone nemorosa Anemone nemorosa Lathraea squamaria

Showing records 1 to 3 of 13

This is the current (April 2014) Home Page, showing the log-in box and some recently uploaded photos, awaiting my getting to check them out!

Plant highlights from 2013

These are just a few of the better records that come to mind, from what I have so far received at any rate, and include one or two from previous years that got overlooked, or have only just arrived. Listed in alphabetical order of scientific name, for ease of use:

Adiantum capillus-veneris (**Maidenhair Fern**). Never common with us, this was found by the Grand Union Canal at Apsley (00/S), 16/7/2013 C.Schofield.

Agrimonia procera (**Fragrant Agrimony**). It is quite extraordinary to be able to report another record of this rare plant, after the previous one last year! It turned up in some quantity in the damp glade, recently re-opened, at Danemead N.R., Broxbourne Woods (30/P), 1/7/2013 T.J. An old record from the adjacent Highfield Wood in the early part of the 20th century may well have referred to the same place. It needs to be watched for in damper, more acidic rough grasslands in such places (not that this sort of habitat is now at all common!)

Chenopodium glaucum (**Oak-leaved Goosefoot**). This appeared in quantity by two roads near Ware: Hoe Lane and the adjoining Stanstead Road (31/L), 29/8/2013 T.J. This was particularly interesting, as the former was by the Highways depot, which might suggest a source for the unusual population that has been identified on Kings Meads, Hertford, not far from the A10 viaduct! It is usually a dung-heap/manure species, so its occurrence by roads, possibly owing to salt enrichment, is interesting anyway.

Cirsium x subspinuligerum (*C. palustre* x *C. vulgare*) (**Marsh Thistle x Spear Thistle**).



An extraordinary, tall, long-spined thistle in the edge of old scrub at The Roundings, Hertford Heath (31/K), 24/7/2013 T.J./Flora Group, this was examined by the national referee for *Cirsium*, Dr Kevin Walker, and pronounced to be this rare hybrid, a new County record. However, there is a bit of dispute, as another UK expert, Eric Clement, thinks it may be just a large *C. palustre* (Marsh Thistle). As it was adjacent to both of the putative parents, and looked very much like a half-way between them, I tend to favour the former!

Clinopodium acinos (**Basil Thyme**). This was found surviving by the road verge at Deadman's Hill, Sandon (23/Y), 29/8/2013 T.J. There now appear to be very few sites for this in the County at all, so it is worth knowing it survives here. I would appreciate people keeping a close eye open for it on bare, chalky banks across the County.

XConyzigeron huelsenii (*Erigeron acris* x *Conyza canadensis*) (**Blue Fleabane x Canadian Fleabane**). This rather robust, but odd-looking hybrid was found on a roadside at Ashwell (23/U), 14/12/2013 T.J. Its parents occur in nearby areas. It is a new County record.

Erigeron glaucus (**Seaside Daisy**). Reported as 'scarcely naturalised' at an old allotment at Offley (12/N), 26/5/2011 D. Broughton. 'New' to the County.

Erophila majuscula (**Hairy Whitlowgrass**). This was found on a dry bank by the R. Gade at Gaddesden Meadows (01/F), 30/3/2013 T.J. There are very few confirmed records so far for this species, and this is the first in a more-or-less 'natural' situation.

Euphorbia oblongata (**Balkan Spurge**). This was found established in scrub woodland adjacent to the A1(M) at Ninnings Wood (21/P), 1/9/2013 T.J. This escaped plant is a new County record.

Filago minima (**Small Cudweed**). Found on a bare bank at Cooper's Green Gravel Pits (10/Z), 25/6/2013 R.W.J.Uffen (conf. T.J.). This adds to the slowly increasing list of sites where this inconspicuous cudweed has recently been found.

Fumaria parviflora (**Fine-leaved Fumitory**). A single plant of this attractive, but inconspicuous fumitory was found on chalk at Deadman's Hill, Sandon (23/Y), 29/8/2013 T.J. It is very vulnerable to weed-killer, and nationally scarce.

Geranium columbinum (**Long-stalked Crane's-bill**). This turned up on recently disturbed soil by an old hedge at Sarratt (09/J), July 2013 G. Salisbury. It is increasingly rare in the County, and only now seems to appear from long-buried seed.

Medicago polymorpha (**Toothed Medick**). This was found by a track at Widford (41/H), 7/6/2013 T.J. It had not been reported in the County for many years, but may be overlooked in weedy places on bare ground. To be looked for.

Misopates orontium (**Weasel's-snout**). This was reported as established on a long-standing allotment site at The Swillett, Chorleywood (09/C), August 2013 A. Boswell (comm.: B. Harold). Its source and continuity here are uncertain. It occurs in a garden at Ashwell (23/U) as well, but these plants are known to have derived from introduced seed from southern Europe, although it has re-appeared on a regular basis for over 15 years. The Chorleywood record is the first 'in the wild' in the County since 1966.

Nectaroscordum siculum (**Honey Garlic**). Possibly scarcely 'escaped', this was found as a relict on a derelict allotment at Offley (12/N), 26/5/2011 D. Broughton (recently reported). It is 'new' to the County in this capacity.

Ornithopus perpusillus (**Bird's-foot**). This was re-found at Patmore Heath (42/M), 14/9/2013 T.J./Flora Group; and was also found at an apparently new site, Gustardwood Common (11/T), 21/6/2012 A.Harris, which I failed to report last year.

Orobanche hederæ (**Ivy Broomrape**). A substantial colony of this was found on ivy by Ware Road, Hertford (31/L), 29/8/2013 T.J. This adds to its steadily-growing number of sites across the County.

Pulsatilla vulgaris (**Pasqueflower**). The famous population on Church Hill, Therfield Heath (33/J) was estimated at c.100,000 plants on 27/4/2013 T.J., with another 17 flowering plants on Pen Hills, following a wet 2012 and a cold winter. Despite its abundance at this site, though, it is very vulnerable to a combination of climate warming, trampling by visitors and nutrient enrichment by visitors' dogs etc., let alone seed- and flower-picking!

Rosa multiflora (**Many-flowered Rose**). This striking, white-flowered rose, escaped from cultivation, was found as an established clump in an old hedgerow at Walsworth, Hitchin (12/Z), 20/9/2013 T.J. This was actually the second record of this as an escape in the County, although the first record, from scrub near Bowyer's Water, Cheshunt (30/Q), 22/6/2010 T.J., has not actually previously been reported!

Salvia pratensis (**Meadow Clary**). It is worth reporting that a single, non-flowering plant was found to be persisting on the chalky road verge by the former chalk quarry along Ware Road, Hertford (31/L), 29/8/2013 T.J., where it was found by Ann Boucher in the 1990s (and had previously been recorded in the 19th century!). Its long-persistence here is remarkable (although now very vulnerable to road verge mismanagement, and being engulfed by the adjoining garage works).

Sasa veitchii (**Veitch's Bamboo**). A clump of this was found in a scrubby hedge adjoining the Hertford Road, Ware (31/L), 29/8/2013 T.J. This is a new escape from cultivation in the County.

Silene noctiflora (**Night-flowering Catchfly**). Now a very rare plant, this turned up as an arable weed on chalk at Deadman's Hill, Sandon (23/Y), 29/8/2013 T.J.

Solidago virgaurea (**Golden-rod**). It is nice to be able to report that this was found in two new spots in Broxbourne Wood (30/I), 25/6/2013 T.J. It had apparently disappeared from its former site by the main ride

there some time ago, and is also likely to have been obliterated by over-zealous ride-reconstruction through the rest of the nearby woodlands by the Hatfield Estates. Why it is so rare with us is a mystery.

Symphoricarpos x doorenbosii (*S. microphyllus* x *S. orbiculatus* x *S. albus*) (**Doorenbos' Coralberry**). This triple hybrid was found as an established escape from former plantings at Walsworth Common, Hitchin (12/Z), 20/9/2013 T.J. A new 'escape' for the County, but likely to be established elsewhere.

Thalictrum flavum (**Meadow-rue**). Never common in the County, it was pleasing to get a 'new' record: from Thorley Wash N.R. (41/Z) (in v.c.19: [Herts]), 15/6/2013 T.J. It has no doubt been there for a long time, but the site has only recently come into administrative Herts.! Removal of most of the scrub on the site recently may enable it to spread.

Thalictrum minus (**Lesser Meadow-rue**). Despite fears that it might have succumbed, the small native colony on the road verge at Deadman's Hill, Sandon (23/Y) was found to be in good shape this year, with at least two healthy-looking flowering clumps, 29/8/2013 T.J.

Veronica austriaca (**Large Speedwell**). This European plant, often grown in gardens, was found self-seeding at the site of a former allotment at Offley (12/N), 26/5/2011 D. Broughton; and has also now been found as a pavement weed at Baldock (23/M), 18/6/2013 T.J. It seems not to have been found in the County as an escape before, but is likely to be elsewhere.

Viola canina (**Heath Dog-violet**). This was re-found, in some quantity, in the heathy grassland at the north-west side of Knebworth Park (22/F), 8/6/2013 T.J./Flora Group. It had not been seen here for many years.

Viola tricolor (**Wild Pansy**). Occurrences of the real thing are beginning to increase (possibly because I am looking out for them more carefully!). This was found, with its hybrid with *V. arvensis* (*V. x contempta*), by an arable field near Loefield Grove, Benington (32/A), 13/6/2013 T.J.

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Herts Flora Group meetings 2014

For all field meetings, these are all-day meetings, so please bring lunch and plenty to drink, as well as insect repellents, sun-hats, sun-cream etc. (or rain gear!). Again, this year, I have focused on the needs of the BSBI 2020 Atlas field recording. One of the meetings is joint with Herts BNA. As always, be prepared to come with identification books, hand lenses, collecting equipment etc., and to be stationary for lengths of time!

Saturday 17th May Benington area: recording in tetrad 22/W. Leader: Trevor James.

Meet near Benington church (TL298237), 10.00 a.m. The general area has some good sites, such as Oxshott Hill, High Wood, etc., some of which I hope to be able to gain access to.

Sunday 8th June Aldenham: recording tetrad 19/J. Leader: Trevor James.

Meet near the church (TQ139985), 10.00 a.m. This was an area that, in the beginning of the Flora Project, produced well over 300 species in a single day. Sites include Berrygrove Wood, Wall Hall etc.

Saturday 19th July Great Gaddesden area: tetrad recording for TL01/F and/or G. Leader: Andrew Harris.

Meet by school in Great Gaddesden (TL 029112), 10.00 a.m. This will no doubt include Gaddesden Meadows and possibly Hoo Wood and its adjacent pastures. Joint with the British Naturalists' Association Herts Branch.

Saturday 23rd August Chorleywood: tetrad recording in 09/I. Leader: Trevor James.

Meet at Chorleywood Common car park (TQ032967), 10.00 a.m. Sites obviously include the Common, but also the grounds of Chorleywood House.

Saturday 13th September London Colney: recording in tetrad 10/R. Leader: Trevor James.

Meet at Broad Colney car park (TL135032), 10.00 a.m. We have been here before, but not to carry out full-scale tetrad style recording, so will endeavour not only to re-find some of the rare arable weeds at Barley Mo Farm, but also examining ruderal ground at Old Parkbury pits etc.

Saturday 4th October Great Amwell: recording in tetrad 31/R. Leader: Trevor James.

Meet in the village (TL372124), 10.00 a.m. As well as the Amwell Quarry NR site (if we can get access to the best bits), we also have riverside fen, the old railway, the village itself etc. to examine. The area is rich in alien species, and so the late date might help us. It is also so far the richest tetrad in the County.