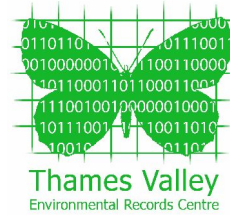




# A Rare Plants Register for Oxfordshire



The Rare Plants Group has started work on developing a Rare Plants Register for Oxfordshire following the Botanical Society of the British Isles initiative. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre is generously giving time and expertise to this project.

## What is a rare plants register?

It is not the same as a County flora as more is recorded than simple presence or absence. As well as listing all the rare plants in the county, the register will contain information about the location of the sites and the size and general health of the population. Limited access will be given to sensitive information.

## Why is a register needed?

We need to know where our rare plants grow, so that they can be protected. One plant becomes extinct in every county every decade: we want to stop that happening in Oxfordshire. Protection includes forewarning developers of any rarity in the area under their consideration. Many landowners are more than happy to preserve habitats if they are aware of the necessity to do so. If sites are in poor condition (for the health of the plant), then advice can be given on how to improve the plant's chance of survival.

## What is a rare plant?

The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) has issued guidelines to address this problem. If a plant is found in three or fewer locations, it is considered locally rare; if in 10 or fewer locations it is considered locally scarce.

The new Red Data List (Cheffings and Farrell 2005) puts our rare plants into categories of risk, the highest being *critically endangered*, through *endangered* to *vulnerable* and then *near threatened*. Special attention will be given to plants found in Oxfordshire which are on this list and also ones on the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list and also on nationally rare and nationally scarce lists.

With these considerations in mind the committee has drawn up a draft list of 300+ plants. This list can be found on the website, [www.oxfordrareplants.org.uk](http://www.oxfordrareplants.org.uk). Also in accordance with the BSBI guidelines, mostly native plants and archaeophytes (plants introduced into Britain before 1500) are being considered but not the neophytes. Microspecies e.g. dandelions and blackberries, subspecies and hybrids are being ignored.

Several plants on the list have more than 10 locations (some dating back to 1986) but it is expected that not all of them will be refound. Once more than 10 sites have been recorded, then the species will be dropped from the list.

Searching all the sites will be an enormous task so we are appealing for help, as much as possible, but even a small amount of time given will be valuable. If you are interested in helping, decide what you would like to do: concentrate on one site, one species or on a region and then get in touch with the regional co-ordinator.

The RPG has set aside some days in its summer programme for searching. Regional co-ordinators and volunteers will be working at other times as well.

#### **Contacts:**

For recording cards and guidelines contact Frances [frances.watkins@anthriscus.co.uk](mailto:frances.watkins@anthriscus.co.uk)

For location data contact Ellen Lee of the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre [ellen.lee@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ellen.lee@oxfordshire.gov.uk) Tel. 01993814147 The Oxfordshire Museum, Fletcher's House, Woodstock, OX20 1SN

For recording on BBOWT reserves contact Debbie Lewis [debbielewis@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:debbielewis@bbowt.org.uk) Tel. 01865 775476 The Lodge, 1 Armstrong Rd., Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 4XT

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The Rare Plants Group is part of the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire and works with English Nature, Plantlife, the Environment Agency, the University of Oxford and the Local Authorities to conserve rare plants in Oxfordshire. Web site [www.oxfordrareplants.org.uk](http://www.oxfordrareplants.org.uk)