

Identifying

flowers in meadows, verges
and limestone grassland



Early flowering

◀ Marsh-marigold

Caltha palustris

A robust low-growing perennial with shiny heart-shaped leaves. Yellow buttercup-like flowers 1-5cm across, borne at the end of the stems. Found in wetter areas of hay meadows.

Height: 30cm

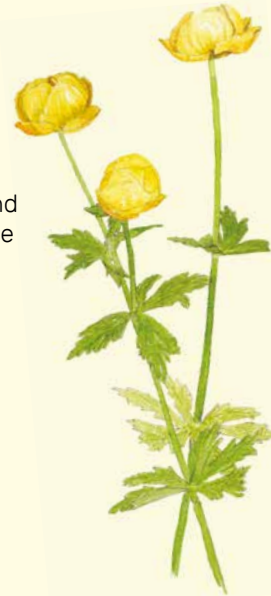


Globeflower ▶

Trollius europaeus

A large member of the buttercup family with shiny palmate leaves and large pale yellow globose flower heads. Found in damper meadows.

Height: 70cm

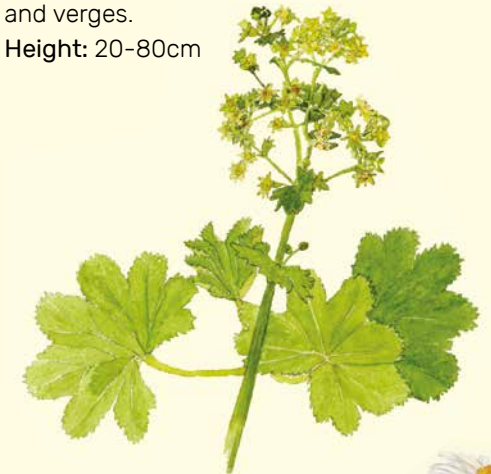


Lady's-mantle ▼

Alchemilla species

The plants have shallowly lobed palmate leaves and frothy heads of small star-shaped light-green flowers. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 20-80cm



Pignut ▶

Conopodium majus

A small, delicate plant with filigree dark-green leaves and umbels of small white flowers, growing from a small, round tuber. Found in verges and meadows.

Height: 40cm

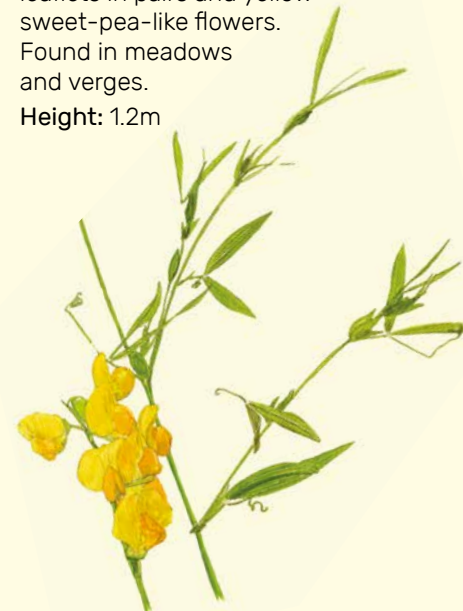


Meadow vetchling ▼

Lathyrus pratensis

A climbing perennial with grey-green leaflets in pairs and yellow sweet-pea-like flowers. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 1.2m



Red campion ▲

Silene dioica

Found in striking combinations in spring with bluebells and lesser stichwort. Found in hedgerows, woodland edges and verges.

Height: 30-100cm

◀ Yellow-rattle

Rhinanthus minor

An annual with opposite toothed leaves. Yellow-lipped flowers mature to a seed case, inflating to a papery bladder. A hemi-parasite on many grass species. Found in grasslands.

Height: 50cm



Oxeye daisy ▶

Leucanthemum vulgare

The tall stems have spoon-shaped pale-green toothed leaves with large, white-petalled daisy flowers. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 75cm





◀ Wood crane's-bill ▶

Geranium sylvaticum

A perennial with lobed leaves and purplish-pink flowers with white bases. The seed pods have long-beaked seeds resembling a bird's bill. Found in hedgerows, woodlands and meadows.

Height: 70cm



◀ Meadow crane's-bill ▶

Geranium pratense

A perennial with finely lobed leaves and blue-violet bowl shaped flowers. Common in verges and meadow margins.

Height: 30-80cm

Water avens ▶

Geum rivale

Upright stems bear hanging flowers of pale apricot with dark-red veins. The seed head has long, red hairs. Common in base rich verges.

Height: 50cm



◀ Eyebright ▶

Euphrasia officinalis agg.

An annual with toothed leaves. Petals are white to purple, usually with darker veins and a yellow blotch on the lower lip. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 35cm



◀ Lesser stitchwort ▶

Stellaria graminea

A slender perennial that scrambles among taller grasses and flowers. It has starry white flowers and brittle stems. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: up to 30cm



◀ Common bistort ▶

Polygonum bistorta

Pale pink flowers form a dense spike at the end of the flowering stem. Patch-forming. Common in verges.

Height: 100cm



◀ Rough hawkbit ▶ ▶

Leontodon hispidus

Hairy stems arise from a rosette of toothed leaves. The small yellow 'dandelion' flowers often have a red underside to the petals. Found in drier grasslands.

Height: 60cm



Melancholy thistle ▶

Cirsium heterophyllum

Stems bear large purple thistle flowers. The large leaves have felted undersides that form a wide rosette. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 1.2m



Common knapweed ▼

Centaurea nigra

A clump-forming plant with rough leaves with thistle-like reddish-purple flowers. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 100cm



Betony ▼

Stachys officinalis

Consists of leafy rosettes and two to four pairs of stem leaves. The reddish purple flowers are 12-18mm across. Found on drier slopes in meadows.

Height: 75cm



Meadowsweet ▲

Filipendula ulmaria

A tall plant with red stems, toothed basal leaves and a frothy head of small sweet-smelling tiny flowers. Found in damper meadows, field margins and verges.

Height: 1.2m



Great burnet ◀▲

Sanguisorba officinalis

A tall plant with finely toothed leaves. The flowers form a dense dark red oblong spike at the end of the flowering stem. Found in meadows and verges.

Height: 1.2m



Limestone wildflowers

◀ Salad burnet

Sanguisorba minor

Cucumber scented, this little plant bears dark red button-like flowers from a rosette of fresh green leaves.

Height: 15-40cm



▶ Rock rose

Helianthemum nummularium

A many branched shrub from a thick woody stem, with tiny leaves and bright yellow, crinkly petalled flowers.

Height: 5-30cm



◀ Lady's bedstraw

Galium verum

A perennial of limestone and dry grassland with dark green needle-like leaves and frothy puffs of tiny lime green flowers.

Height: 15-60cm



Wild thyme ▼

Thymus polytrichus

Often grazed to a low mat, with heads of pink flowers. Unlike the culinary herb, this is only faintly thyme scented.

Height:

Up to 20cm



▶ Small scabious

Scabiosa columbaria

A slender perennial with a rosette of toothed or finely cut leaves and characteristic blue-violet scabious flower.

Height: 15-70cm



▶ Dog violet

Viola riviniana

This unscented violet has dark blue-violet petals and sometimes flowers twice - in spring and then late summer.

Height: 2-20cm



Fairy flax ▶

Linum catharticum

This dainty annual plant has dark wire-like stems with small clasping leaves and white flowers like tiny open bells.

Height: 5-25cm



▶ Mouse-ear hawkweed

Pilosella officinarum

The white backed 'mouse ear' leaves are easy to spot on overground stems. The flowers are pale yellow dandelion lookalikes, striped red underneath.

Height: 5-30cm



▶ Tormentil

Potentilla erecta

Scrambles amongst grass and heather stems bearing numerous tiny yellow four petalled rose-like flowers.

Height: Up to 10cm



▶ Bird's-foot trefoil

Lotus corniculatus

A low creeping plant with clusters of rich yellow flowers often tinged with red. The shiny slender brown seed pods give the plant its name.

Height: 10-40cm



▶ Harebell

Campanula rotundifolia

The familiar nodding lilac-blue bell-like flower of harebells can be found on low fertility grasslands, often rocky knolls, or in hill pasture.

Height: 15-40cm



▶ Glaucous sedge

Carex flacca

Dark brown flower spikes dangle over a rosette of grey-green grass-like leaves.

Height: 10-40cm



Wildflowers of the Westmorland Dales

The Westmorland Dales boasts fabulous wildflowers throughout the season. This guide is intended to help you identify some of the key species of our flower-rich verges, upland hay meadows, and upland limestone grasslands. Flowering times may differ from our guide according to altitude, aspect and spring temperatures.

Hay meadows

Hay meadows are at their best in June and July. Although a familiar sight in the Westmorland Dales, nationally they are very rare. Over 97% of hay meadows have been lost since the second world war. Their loss has also affected birds, butterflies, bumblebees and other insects which rely on this precious habitat.

A traditional hay meadow is cut once a year after peak flowering time, when most of the wildflowers have set seed. Hay meadows receive little additional fertiliser and are grazed in spring and late summer only. Changes to this traditional farming practice, including conversion from hay to silage and increased use of fertiliser, have all contributed to the loss of hay meadows.

Verges

Wildflowers thrive on many of the roadside verges of the Westmorland Dales, favouring the nutrient-poor soils. Verges are an extremely important part of our landscape, forming wildlife corridors which connect habitats, enabling species to move between different areas.

They are now some of the best places to see once-common wildflowers, such as wood crane's-bill and melancholy thistle, and are increasingly important for other creatures like hares and bumblebees.

Limestone grassland

Higher up the fells on the limestone escarpments and rocky outcrops the flora changes. Shallow, well-drained soils create base-rich conditions known as calcareous grassland but pockets of acid grassland can be found within limestone pavement where rainwater has leached the calcium away. Species that typically indicate acidic conditions may include tormentil and even heather. Where soils are very thin and do little to disguise the underlying limestone, blue moor-grass and common rock-rose are common. The uplands in the central Westmorland Dales are dominated by extensive limestone pavement which is nationally rare. Here you can find species including bird's-foot sedge, autumn gentian and salad burnet.

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Hay meadows



Wildflower ID



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