



Whitchurch Nature Notes (9)

Wild Flowers of the Hardwick Road verges



Hardwick Road is a good example of a road verge that is home to remnants of once widespread flowers found in meadows, along hedges and on farmland. Many are now lost as land-use has changed and farming has become more intensified. In 2000, the Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group (WoTHabs) carried out a plant survey and published the results in a leaflet. An updated version of this leaflet is now available in hardcopy in the box on the gatepost between The Old Farmhouse and Chalkhills on Hardwick Road. This online version provides the same information as the leaflet.

The plants listed below were found on the North verge of Hardwick Road (east), starting at the Chalkhills entrance and extending approximately 700m east to the Hardwick Estate gates. The South verge was also surveyed in 2000 but was not as diverse, probably because it is more shaded and faces north. To simplify the presentation, only those species found on the North verge are included here but of course some may also occur on the South verge as well.

KEY

2nd column:

H = in hedge, though some invade verge by suckers (eg Spindle, Blackthorn)

G = in or near gateways

B = has berries/fruit (*colour of berries in brackets*)

P = introduced plants at former vineyard gate (Guelder Rose from local stock, bluebell a mistake!)

W = restricted to brick and flint wall at Bozedown Farm - this was unfortunately weed killed

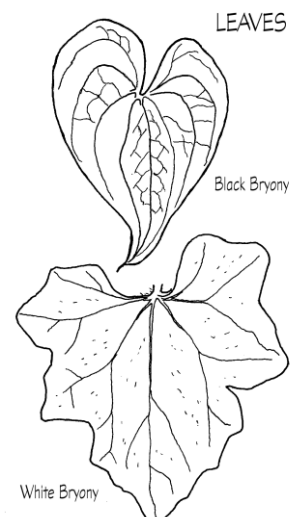
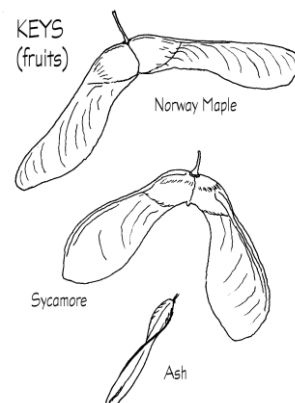
NF = Plants which do not grow tall enough or old enough to flower (e.g. because they are in the hedge and get cut down)

3rd column:

Flowers in - e.g. 2-4 means flowers from Feb to April

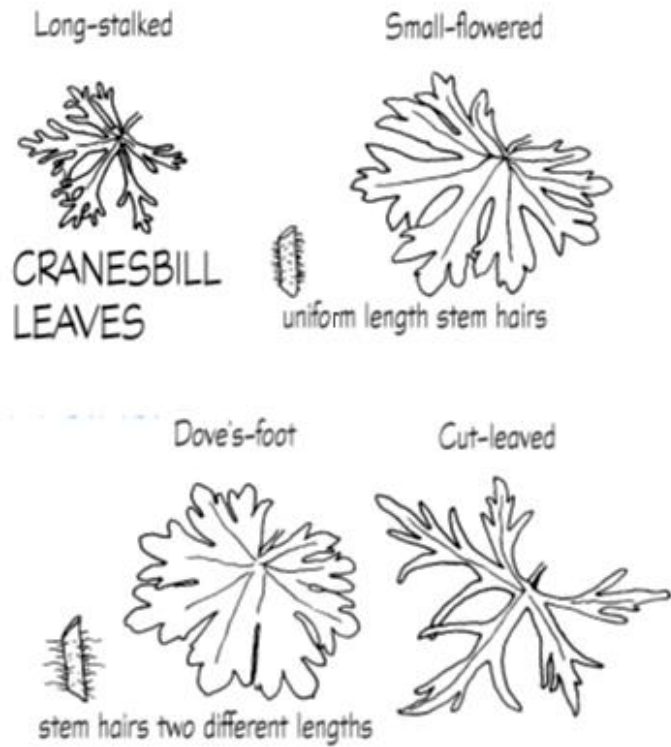
GREEN OR GREENISH FLOWERS

English Elm	H, NF	2-4
Ash	H	4-5
Norway Maple	H	4-5
Sycamore	H	4-6
Ribwort Plantain		4-10
Cuckoo Pint	B	5-6 (red)
Spindle	HB	5-6 (orange & pink)
Black Bryony	B	5-7 (red)
White Bryony	B	5-9 (red)
Pineapple Weed	G	5-9
Broad-leaved Dock		6-10
Clustered Dock		6-10
Curled Dock		6-10
Greater Plantain	G	6-10
Stinging Nettle		6-10
Knotgrass	G	6-11
Old Man's Beard	H	7-9
Ivy		9-11 (black)



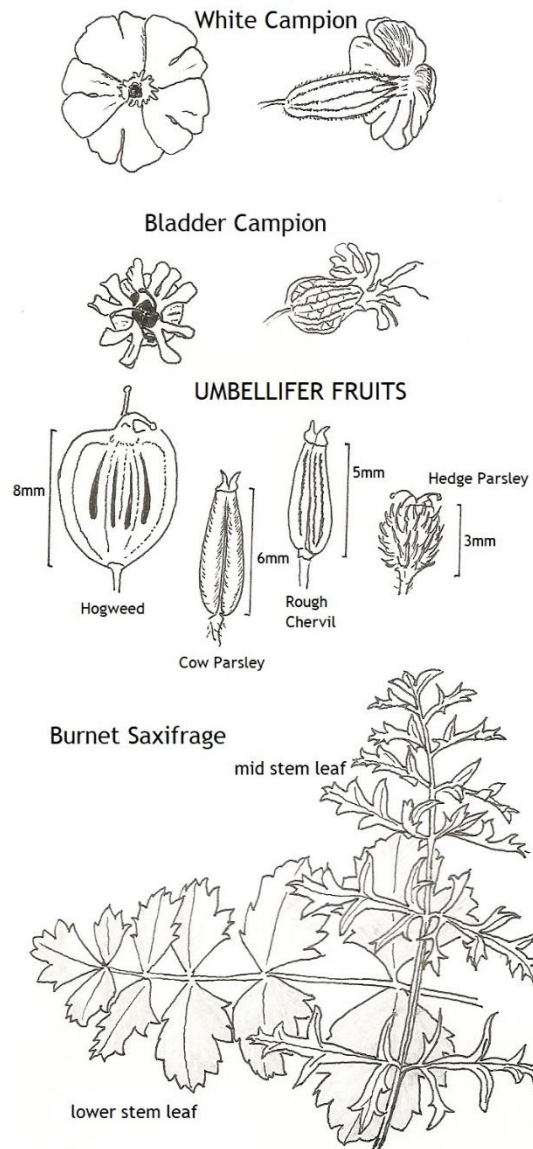
PINK, LILAC, OR PALE PURPLE FLOWERS

Red Dead Nettle		3-10
Dove's-foot Cranesbill		4-9
Herb Robert		4-9
Cut-leaved Cranesbill		5-8
Hairy Tare		5-8
Fumitory	G	5-10
Crow Garlic		6-7
Dog Rose	HB	6-7 (red)
Blue Fleabane	W	6-8
Long-stalked Cranesbill		6-8
Small-flowered Cranesbill		6-9
Common Mallow		6-9
Rest Harrow		6-9
Black Horehound		6-10
Hedge Parsley		7-9
Marjoram		7-9
Wild Basil		7-9



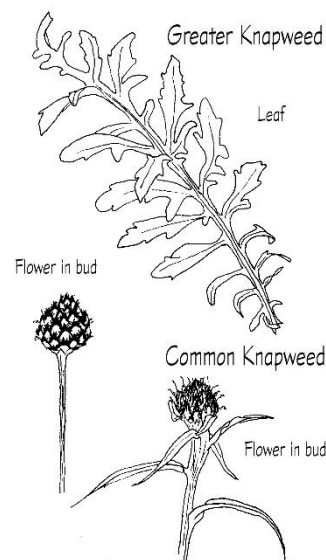
WHITE OR WHITISH FLOWERS

Common Chickweed	G	1-12
Daisy		2-10
White Dead Nettle		3-12
Blackthorn	HB	3-4 (blue-black)
Common Mouse-ear		4-11
Cow Parsley		4-6
Jack-by-the-Hedge		4-6
Hawthorn	HB	5-6 (red)
Guelder Rose	PB	5-7 (red)
Common Comfrey		5-8
Goosegrass		5-8
White Campion		5-9
Elder	HB	6-7 (black)
Rough Chervil		6-7
Wild Privet	HB	6-7 (black)
Bladder Campion		6-8
Ground Elder		6-8
Hogweed		6-8
Blackberry	B	6-9 (black)
Field Bindweed		6-9
White Clover		6-9
Yarrow		6-9
Hedge Bedstraw		7-8
Burnet Saxifrage		7-9
Mugwort		7-9



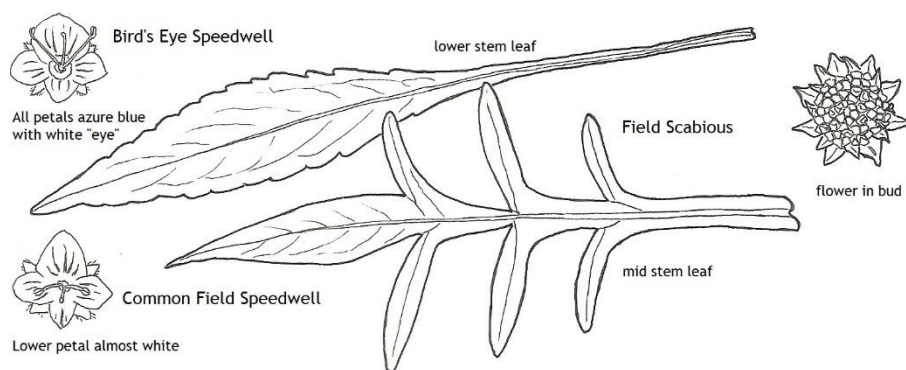
DARK PURPLE, PURPLISH-RED, OR RED FLOWERS

Ground Ivy	3-7
Common Vetch	5-8
Red Clover	5-9
Greater Knapweed	6-8
Common Knapweed	6-9
Butterfly Bush	6-9
Creeping Thistle	6-9
Common Poppy	6-9
Woody Nightshade B	6-9 (red)
Self-heal	6-10
Spear Thistle	7-10



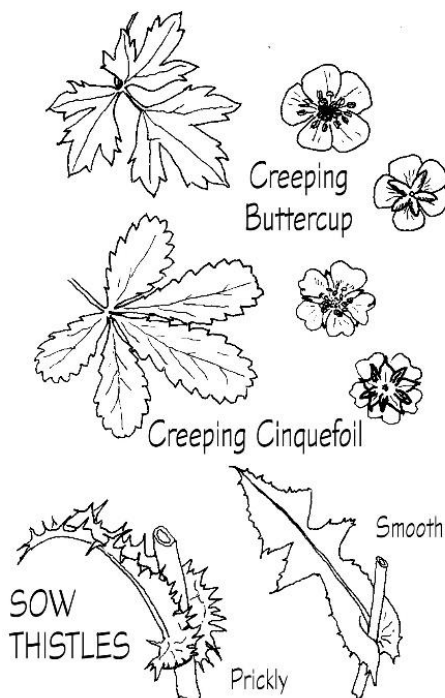
BLUE OR BLUISH-LILAC FLOWERS

Common Field Speedwell	1-12
Bluebell (Spanish) P	4-5
Cornsalad	4-6
Bird's Eye Speedwell	4-7
Field Forget-me-not	4-8
Field Scabious	6-8
Chicory	7-9



YELLOW FLOWERS

Groundsel G	1-12
Lesser Celandine	2-5
Bulbous Buttercup	3-7
Dandelion	3-10
Cowslip P	4-5
Meadow Buttercup	4-9
Charlock	4-10
Beaked Hawk's-beard	5-7
Goat's Beard	5-7
Black Medick	5-8
Meadow Vetchling	5-8
Creeping Buttercup	5-9
Wood Avens	5-9
Lesser Trefoil	5-10
Agrimony	6-8
Bird's Foot Trefoil	6-9
Creeping Cinquefoil	6-9
Perforate St. John's Wort	6-9
Nipplewort	6-10
Prickly Sow-thistle	6-10
Common Ragwort	6-10
Smooth Sow-thistle	6-10
Smooth Hawk's-beard	6-10
Common Toadflax	7-10



Supplementary Note - 2021

This list was made in 2000 and has not been updated. Since then, the management of the road verges has changed. A wider section of the north side gets mown, and more often, the verges get mown at the wrong time of year by the Highways department contractors (before many of the plants have managed to go to seed), and some plants were only occasionals (e.g. Charlock). Some have disappeared due to the changed land use in the adjacent fields e.g. Cornsalad. Cornsalad is an arable weed, and the field next to the north verge is now permanent pasture and no longer in an arable rotation. Others have appeared in the last twenty years. For example, Stinking Iris has appeared on both north and south verges in recent years.

I know about some of the losses and arrivals but I would be pleased to hear about any changes to the list that you notice on either verge as you use Hardwick Road for exercise or to buy your veggies from Lin's Veg Shed. An approximate location would also be helpful. Please contact me, Sandra Parkinson, on sparkinson7@googlemail.com.

Road verges will become a vital part of the national 'Nature Recovery Network' strategy ([Nature Recovery Network | The Wildlife Trusts](#)). So, having up to date information on the plant species on our major road verges is important, as this also affects other wildlife - birds, insects, small mammals and fungi.

Sandra