Recommended Butterfly Native Plant List



Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus)* is a member of the pea family. It grows in sunny grassy places, on well-drained soils, and often appears in lawns. It's a low-growing plant with downy leaves with five leaflets. Its yellow flowers look like little slippers and appear in small clusters between May and September.



Caterpillar food for Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) and Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*).



Common Blue
When to see: May to Oct
Wingspan: 29-36mm



Dingy Skipper
When to see: May to Aug
Wingspan: 27-34mm



Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa)* is part of the Cherry family. A small thorny deciduous tree of hedgerows, scrub and woodland edges where it grows naturally as a dense, thicket-forming shrub. Dark green, ovate leaves, thorns and snow-white flowers in early spring, followed in the autumn and winter by rich, blue-black, dark fruits called sloes which are used to flavour gin.



Caterpillar food Mature blackthorn for Black Hairstreak (*Satyrium pruni*). Younger stems for Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*).



Black Hairstreak
When to see: June to July
Wingspan: 34-40mm



Brown Hairstreak
When to see: July to Sept
Wingspan: 36-45mm



Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius)* grows on waste ground, in hedgerows, gardens and roadside verges. A tall plant with very large, wavy-edged, oblong leaves that have red stems on their undersides. Flower spikes have numerous clusters of reddish-brown flowers and appear from June to October.



Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa)* grows in grasslands, along woodland edges and roadside verges. It has edible, sour-tasting, arrow-shaped leaves. The small reddish flowers, appear in May and June and are on leafless branched spikes. The male and female flowers are found on separate plants and produce a reddish-brown three sided nut.

Caterpillar food Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas).*



Small Copper
When to see: April to Oct
Wingspan: 26-36mm



Cowslips *(Primula veris)* are a semi-evergreen perennial found in meadows, ancient woodlands and hedgerows from April to May. A rosette of distinctly stalked, crinkly, tongue-like leaves and upright stems bearing umbels of nodding, bell-shaped, fragrant rich yellow flowers.



Primroses *(Primula vulgaris)* are found in woodland and grasslands and are small, perennial plants. Leaves are wrinkly with hairy undersides, forming a rosette at the plant's base. They flower, from December through to May, with pale to deep yellow flowers with darker yellow-orange centres and five notched petals.

Caterpillar food for Duke of Burgundy (*Hamearis lucina*).



Duke of Burgundy
When to see: April to June
Wingspan: 30mm





Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) is a springtime perennial also known as Lady's Smock found in damp, grassy places like wet meadows, ditches, riverbanks and roadside verges.

It has a rosette of leaves at its base and an upright stem that bears delicate, small, pale pink flowers. Each flower has four petals, although double-flowered varieties do appear.

Caterpillar food for Orange-tip (*Anthocharis cardamines).*





Orange-tip
When to see: April to July
Wingspan: 45-50mm



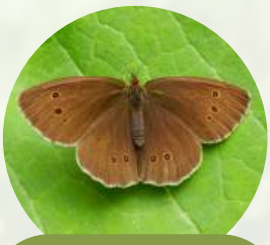


Grasses prefer open, sunny areas. The leaf grows from the base of the blade to cope with frequent grazing. Flowers are wind-pollinated, so are not brightly coloured or strongly scented.

Caterpillar food for the Brown family: Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*), Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*), Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*) and Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*).



Marbled White
When to see: June to Aug
Wingspan: 53-58mm



Ringlet
When to see: June to Sept
Wingspan: 48-52mm



Speckled Wood
When to see: March to Oct
Wingspan: 46-56mm



Gatekeeper
When to see: July to Aug
Wingspan: 37-48mm



Small Heath
When to see: April to Sept
Wingspan: 33-37mm



Meadow Brown
When to see: June to Sept
Wingspan: 40-60mm





Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) is an evergreen tree found in woodland and gardens. Younger plants have dark green, glossy spiky leaves, older trees leaves are likely to be smooth.

Holly is dioecious, so male and female flowers are on different trees. Flowers appear between early spring and the beginning of summer, are white with four petals. Female flowers develop into scarlet berries which can remain on the tree throughout winter.

Caterpillar food for Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*).





Holly Blue
When to see: April to Sept
Wingspan: 26-34mm



Horseshoe Vetch *(Hippocrepis comosa)* is a creeping woody-based perennial, about 40cm tall, with mid-green leaves divided into leaflets. Flowers are yellow pea-like which appear from May to July on chalk and limestone grasslands with short turf.



Caterpillar food for Adonis Blue (*Polyommatus bellargus*), Chalkhill Blue (*Polyommatus coridon*)

Adonis Blue
When to see: May to Sept
Wingspan: 30-40mm



Chalkhill Blue
When to see: July to Sept
Wingspan: 33-40mm







Kidney Vetch *(Anthyllis vulneraria)* is about 60cm tall and can be found between June and September on open grassland, dunes and sea cliffs. It has spreading stems with narrow leaflets that are silky and white underneath. The small flowers are mainly yellow, but can also be orange and red. Each flower has its own hairy calyx, giving the flower cluster its woolly appearance.

Caterpillar food for Small Blue *(Cupido minimus)*.



Small Blue
When to see: May to Aug
Wingspan: 18-27mm



Nettles *(Urtica dioica)* are perennials, up to 1.5m tall, with dark green leaves and stems covered in stinging and non-stinging hairs. Cream or brownish-green flowers in summer.



Small Nettles *(Urtica urens)* are bushy annuals with stems up to 75cm, with toothed leaves covered in tiny hairs that can irritate. Clusters of small, greenish white flowers in summer.

Caterpillar food for Comma (*Polygonia c-album*), Peacock (*Aglais io*), Small Tortoiseshell, (*Aglais urticae*) and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*).



Comma
When to see: Jan to Dec
Wingspan: 55-60mm



Peacock
When to see: Jan to Dec
Wingspan: 63-75mm



Red Admiral
When to see: Jan to Dec
Wingspan: 64- 78mm



Small Tortoiseshell
When to see: Jan to Dec
Wingspan: 45-62mm



English Oak *(Quercus robur)*
A large, deciduous tree growing up to 40m tall that can live well over 500 years. The leaves are 10cm long, dark green on the upper side and pale green on the lower, and have between 3 to 6 lobes.



Long yellow-green catkins appear in spring. The acorns produced grow in small cups, in clusters of two or three, and ripen from green to brown.

Caterpillar food for Purple Hairstreak (*Favonius quercus*).



Purple Hairstreak
When to see: June to Sept
Wingspan: 30-40mm

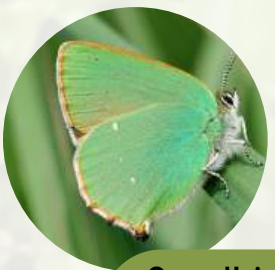


Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) is a low-growing, creeping, evergreen shrub that likes sunny chalk grassland, cliffs and rocks. It flowers from June to September with five large bright yellow, crinkly petals.



The leaves are tiny, oval grey-green with white and woolly undersides.

Caterpillar food for Brown Argus (*Aricia agestis)* & Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi)*.



Green-Hairstreak
When to see: April to June
Wingspan: 27-34mm



Brown Argus
When to see: May and Sept
Wingspan: 25-31mm





Violets (*Viola spp.*) There are 4 main species found in the Chilterns. Common Dog (*V. riviniana*), Early-dog *(V. reichenbachiana),* Hairy *(V. hirta)* & Sweet (*V. odorata*)

These perennials grow in a sheltered spot in light shade and make good, light ground cover in a dappled woodland, garden or under shrubs. With heart-shaped leaves and fragrant purple, blue or white flowers in late winter and early spring.

Caterpillar food for Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) and Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*).



Dark-green fritillary
When to see: June to Sept
Wingspan: 58-68mm



Silver-washed fritillary
When to see: June to Aug
Wingspan: 69-80mm





Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) trees can grow to a height of 30m. They have an oval leaf that is toothed around the edges and tapers to a point with very short stalks. All elm leaf bases are asymmetrical.

In winter, both the bud and twig are densely covered in orange hairs. The winged fruit, has thin wings curving inwards to form a circle or oval around the seed in the centre. The seed is green at first and then turns reddish brown.

Caterpillar food for White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*).



White-letter Hairstreak
When to see: June to Aug
Wingspan: 25-35mm





Wild Strawberry *(Fragaria vesca)*
Wild strawberries are found on grassy banks of limestone and chalk downlands, open woodland, scrubland and railway cuttings.

The trefoil leaves are glossy with toothed edges and hairy undersides. The flowers are white with five petals and a golden centre. The red fruit are heart-shaped with tiny seeds on the outside.

Caterpillar food for Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus malvae*).



Grizzled skipper
When to see: April to Aug
Wingspan: 23-29mm

All of these plants (and more!) provide food for many species of moth - the butterfly's nocturnal cousin who are often overlooked as efficient pollinators.

Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Thank you to Butterfly Conservation & Jim Asher for the fabulous photos

CHILTERN RANGERS