

# *Cornfield Flowers Project*



## **Saving Cornfield Flowers**

The Cornfield Flowers Project aims to conserve and encourage wildflowers that grow in arable fields. These plants used to be a common sight in our rural landscape for hundreds of years, but due to intensification of farming practices since the 1940's, many have become extremely rare throughout Britain, and some have become extinct entirely.

To reverse this loss of our natural heritage and the unique flora of North East Yorkshire, the Cornfield Flowers Project was created in 2000. Working alongside local farmers and with the support of volunteer horticulturalists, naturalists, schools and enthusiasts, this unique project aims to locate the last sites of these rare species and safeguard their future through propagation of collected seed and the reintroduction of new plants into protected farm fields.

Follow the links to see more on some of the species we have successfully worked to conserve, and how you could become involved in our work.

The Cornfield Flowers Project is spearheaded by the Carstairs Countryside Trust, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire Moors Association and North York Moors National Park Authority. It has a demonstration field and nursery at Ryedale Folk Museum and a working arable field at Silpho, near Scarborough. It is supported by the North York Moors National Park Sustainable Development Fund, North York Moors Coast & Hills LEADER Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.



# Our Target Species

The Project works with numerous plants of national and local importance, and the list continues to expand with new discoveries. The following are just a few of our most important species.

The first four are regarded as 'Priority Species' in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and are the subject of national efforts to conserve them. 'Critically Endangered' is the last designation category before a plant becomes extinct.



**Red hemp-nettle**  
(*Galeopsis angustifolia*)

**Critically Endangered**

A very rare plant of national conservation concern, the Project was successful in providing 2000 seeds to the Millennium Seed bank at Kew.



**Shepherd's-needle**  
(*Scandix pecten-veneris*)

**Critically Endangered**

A member of the carrot family, the seed pods form long, narrow spikes that resemble needles.



**Corn buttercup**  
(*Ranunculus arvensis*)

**Critically Endangered**

A very rare member of the buttercup family, the seed pods form distinctive deeply spoked 'wheels'



**Cornflower**  
(*Centaurea cyanus*)

**Nationally rare**

The iconic plant of cornfields of old, and often included in wildflower mixes, but now very rare in its wild, native form.



**Prickly poppy**  
(*Papaver argemone*)

**Vulnerable**

A charming poppy, which only opens in the morning sun and drops its petals by midday to reveal a prickly pod.



**Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor*)**

**Near threatened**

Unlike the common field pansy with which it can hybridise, this species is threatened. The flowers are very variable in colour.



**Night-flowering catchfly**  
(*Silene noctiflora*)

**Vulnerable**

A member of the campion family, with sticky buds and flowers which only open at night, using strong scent to attract moth pollinators.



**Sharp-leaved fluellen**  
(*Kickxia elatine*)

**Locally very rare (one known site)**

a prostrate plant with arrow-shaped pointed leaves and small yellow flowers with a purple upper-lip.



**Large-flowered hemp-nettle**  
(*Galeopsis speciosa*)

**Vulnerable**

A large and attractive plant with pale yellow flowers and a distinctive violet spot on the lower petal. A member of the dead-nettle family.



**Venus'-looking-glass**  
(*Legousia hybrida*)

**Locally rare**

A member of the bellflower family, with bristle covered leaves and small purple flowers that only open in sunshine.

# Contact

If you are a local farmer, smallholder, horticulturalist, naturalist or school and would be interested in working with the Cornfield Flowers Project, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

The Project is aiming to involve more groups in the propagation of plants and collection of seed, so as to further safeguard these rare species and share the specialist knowledge required in nurturing such remarkable plants.

If you feel you could support us in these aims, then please contact the Project Officers below:

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