



An Introduction to Wildflowers (Flora) in Walderslade Woods.



Walderslade Woods Group
Spring Flower Guide

We recommend you wear comfortable outdoor footwear and clothes when walking the woods.

Walderslade Woods Group is a local group of volunteers who manage and maintain the 3 woods in the area *ROUND WOOD, COSSINGTON VALLEY and TUNBURY VALLEY*. On your journey you will encounter several species of wildflowers. Our woods can be very rewarding but you should never uproot or pick a wildflower or collect seed from the rarest plants, as a picked flower never produces seed and they are protected by law. Some plants may also be poisonous. Try to disturb the wildflowers environment as little as possible as even the **BLUEBELL** in spring is threatened by having its leaves trampled by feet. The bluebells that carpet our woods are brightly coloured violet-blue (very rarely white) bell shaped and richly scented, they have long strap-shaped leaves. There are several species of bluebells in the woods



beside the native **BRITISH BLUEBELL**. The **SPANISH BLUEBELL** was introduced in the year 1600. It has thicker leaves and a lighter flower and stands more upright. The **HYBRID BLUEBELL** was introduced in the year 1960.



Wildflowers can be identified by their
Petal Sepals Stamens Stigma & styles

One of the earliest spring flowers is the **CUCKOO FLOWER** (Lady's Smock) derived

from the association of milkmaids smocks. The flowering time coincides with the arrival of the cuckoo's song. The flowers cluster loosely at the tip of the stem and maybe deep lilac to white in colour. Its base leaves have narrow leaflets.



The **PRIMROSE** has single pale yellow flowers, petals notched on hairy stalks. The leaves are hairless above and hairy below, tapering to the base and the flowers grow from the centre of the rosette. The unmistakable "First Rose" is the herald of spring.



WOOD ANEMONE. Also carpets our woods in the spring, it is characteristic of



surviving in former ancient woodlands. The single white flowers tinged with pink or purple underneath with up to 12 petal like sepals and many pale yellow stamens. The flowers open to take in the sun and raise their nodding heads when closed dancing in the breeze. The single ring of three leaves are divided with toothed lobes and stem leaves forming a ruff below the flower. The whole plant is poisonous.

DOGS MERCURY is a characteristic plant of ancient woodlands and is highly poisonous; it gives off a putrid smell. It has hairy stems and leaves and has catkins of yellow stamen flowers on long spikes, either male or female each on separate plants. The leaves are dark green pointed in opposite pairs and neatly toothed in the margins.



LESSER CELANDINE is a member of the buttercup family, carpeting our woodland. It has 8-12 narrower petals, 3 sepals and bright yellow solitary flowers in clusters which only open in bright sun. The leaves are on long stalks, heart shaped at the base. William Wordsworth wrote a poem praising the flower as shining "*Bright as the sun himself.*"



If you are lucky you will see the **EARLY PURPLE ORCHID** which is very rare in our woods. It has pink-purple flowers in loose spikes on a stout upright stem and can be recognised by the round purplish blotches on the upper surface of its lance shaped leaves. In infamous literature the flowers were draped over Ophelia's drowned body in Shakespeares' Hamlet.



LORDS AND LADIES or **CUCKOO PINT.** This plant has curious pointed flowers, enclosed in a cowl-like spathe, which is ribbed like a seashell. The leaves are long stalked arrow-shaped, shiny and sometimes

purple-spotted. The orange-red berries are highly poisonous. It has many local names such as

JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT and **KITTY-COME-DOWN-THE-LANE-JUMP-UP-AND-KISS-ME.** Starch from the tubers was used like arrowroot and to starch laundry like the elaborate ruffs of Elizabethan England.

GOLDBLOCKS BUTTERCUP is a rare plant in our woods. A perfect flower has up to 5 bright shiny-ragged yellow petals, but one or more petals are often missing. It has deeply divided upper leaves and is the main British woodland species.

The wild flowers of the **VIOLET** family are recognised by their likeness to the garden violets and pansies but are smaller and more delicate than their commercially bred cousins. The **COMMON DOG**



VIOLETS flowers are blue-violet in colour with a pale spur and hang upside down. The

leaves are heart-shaped and the flowers unscented.

MOSCHATEL is a delicate pale green plant which has a musk-like scent which is stronger at dusk and in dampness. Its yellowish-green cubed-shaped flower head has an arrangement of five flowers together, hence its local name "**TOWN HALL CLOCK.**" The fleshy leaves have three lobed leaflets on long stalks.



GREATER STITCHWORT has big star-like white flowers. The five petals are notched halfway in loose clusters with ten pale yellow stamens. Its leaves are stalkless, narrow and long-pointed arranged in opposite pairs. The common name refers to its use as a folk remedy for a stitch or sudden pain.

