



### Primrose

Related to the cowslip, the primrose is one of the earliest plants to flower. Its name comes from the Latin 'prima rosa' which means first rose.

**Scientific name:** *Primula vulgaris*

**Where:** woodland clearings, hedgerows, grasslands, towns and gardens

**Description:** clusters of pale-yellow flowers with darker yellow centres and rough leaves in a circular pattern

**Flowers:** early spring to late May

**Height:** 20 cm (8 inches)

**Conservation:** protected in Northern Ireland

**Wildlife:** provides nectar for butterflies including brimstone and small tortoiseshell; leaves are food for the caterpillars of the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly; insects feeding from wildflowers collect pollen on their bodies and so pollinate other flowers they visit



### Daisy

One of our commonest flowers, its English name comes from an old word meaning 'day's eye'. Its petals close at night, and during the day it moves to face the sun. People sometimes thread daisies together to make daisy chains.

**Scientific name:** *Bellis perennis*

**Where:** in grass and lawns

**Description:** flower heads made up of lots of tiny flowers – yellow in the centre surrounded by white petals with pale pink tips; leaves spreading in a circle

**Flowers:** throughout the year, except in mid-winter

**Height:** 10 cm (4 inches)

**Wildlife:** useful source of nectar and pollen when there are few plants in flower; flat shape of flower makes it easy for bees and other insects to settle on



### Cowslip

Were once very common, but loss of habitat and use of herbicides in farming have made them much rarer. In fact, the name 'cowslip' comes from an old word meaning 'cow pat', because they were found in all the meadows where cattle grazed. Over the centuries they have been used to decorate paths for newly-married couples and to make garlands for the May Queen.

**Scientific name:** *Primula veris*

**Where:** in ancient meadows and woodland

**Description:** bunches of small, yellow, tube-shaped flowers hanging from the stem, with leaves spread in a circle around the base

**Flowers:** April to May

**Height:** 25 cm (10 inches)

**Conservation:** protected in Northern Ireland

**Wildlife:** a good source of early nectar for bees, moths and butterflies



### Buttercup

The most common species of buttercup is the meadow buttercup. It is said that, if you hold the flower under your chin and see a yellow dot reflected there, it means you like butter. Buttercups are heliotropic: their flowers follow the sun.

**Scientific name:** *Ranunculus acris*

**Where:** meadows, pastures, parks and gardens

**Description:** flower has 5 shiny yellow petals on long stems; the leaves have ragged edges and are divided into three to five lobes joined at a central point

**Flowers:** April to October

**Height:** 1 metre (3.3 feet)

**Wildlife:** many insects are attracted to the bright yellow flowers to feed – yellow is their favourite colour; wood pigeons and other birds eat the seeds



### Bluebell

Some woods in spring are described as being 'carpeted with bluebells' – they look and smell amazing! In Scotland harebells are called bluebells, but they are a paler blue and prefer sandy open countryside to woodland.

**Scientific name:** *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*

**Where:** ancient woodland

**Description:** drooping clusters of fragrant violet-blue bell-shaped flowers; long, narrow, drooping leaves

**Flowers:** April to May

**Height:** 50 cm (20 inches)

**Conservation:** protected in the UK – it is a criminal offence to dig up the bulbs

**Wildlife:** rich in pollen and nectar, they provide food for bumblebees and other insects



### Forget-me-not

The scientific name *myosotis* means 'mouse ear' because it has small furry leaves. The flowers are often used to symbolise love and remembrance: in parts of Canada they are worn as symbols of remembrance like poppies are worn in the UK.

**Scientific name:** *Myosotis sylvatica*

**Where:** by paths and hedgerows, ancient woodland and in gardens

**Description:** small five-petalled blue flowers with yellow or white centres; furry leaves and stems

**Flowers:** April to June

**Height:** 50 cm (20 inches)

**Wildlife:** the flowers attract bees, butterflies and moths; caterpillars feed on the leaves



### Field Poppy

Used to be a common sight in summer meadows and corn fields, but chemicals used in farming have meant there are far fewer wildflowers now and so also less wildlife, because they have lost their sources of food. They grow well on disturbed ground, and the blood-red poppies that grew on battlefields during the First World War have become a symbol of remembrance of those who die in war.

**Scientific name:** *Papaver rhoeas*

**Where:** fields, verges and gardens – widespread in Africa, Asia and Europe

**Description:** flowers have four delicate bright red petals with a dark spot at the base; a hairy stem and fern-shaped leaves; the seeds are contained in a smooth egg-shaped 'capsule' below the flower

**Flowers:** June to August

**Height:** 70 cm (28 inches)

**Wildlife:** bees and hoverflies collect pollen; in parts of Europe the solitary mason poppy bee lines its underground nest with poppy petals



### Dandelion

The dandelion gets its name from the French 'dent-de-lion', lion's tooth, possibly because of its 'toothed' leaves. It is an edible plant: the young leaves can be eaten. You can play a game with the round fluffy seed heads, 'dandelion clocks': how many puffs does it take to blow all the seeds from the stem?

**Scientific name:** *Taraxacum officinale*

**Where:** widespread in grassland, gardens, town, and countryside

**Description:** the flowerhead is made of closely-packed bright yellow flowers; after flowering these become round seed heads with the seeds attached to fluffy 'parachutes', which travel long distances carried by

the wind. The stem is filled with a milky white sap. The leaves have wavy edges

**Flowers:** almost all year round

**Height:** 35 cm (14 inches)

**Wildlife:** many animals eat the leaves; the flowers are a good source of nectar

# Flowers