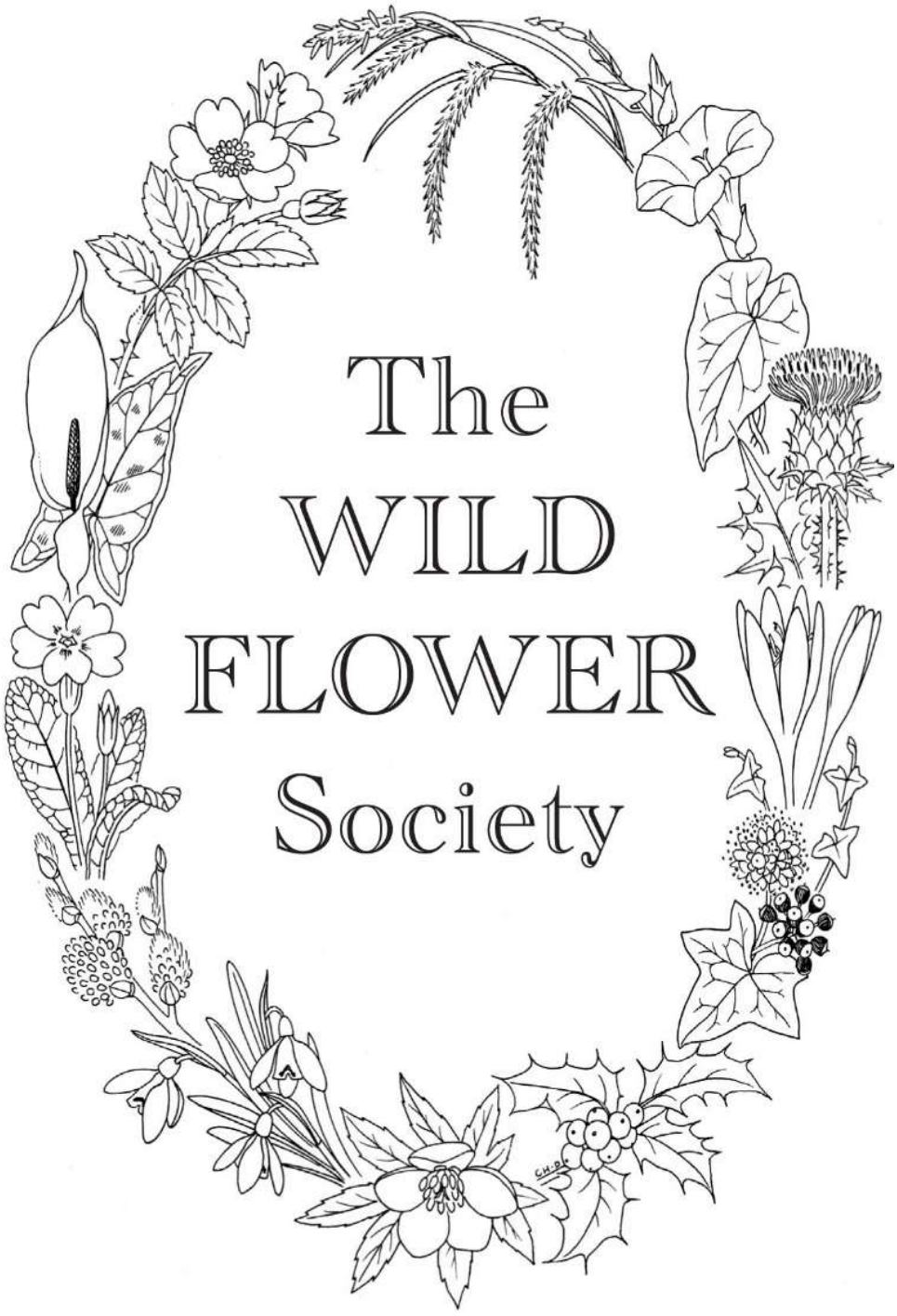
REGULATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Revised September 2025

THE WILD FLOWER SOCIETY
(Registered Charity No. 271694)

ACTIVITIES of the Society and REGULATIONS
for the submission of the *Field Botanist's Record Book*

Introduction

The Wild Flower Society was founded in 1886 to encourage an appreciation of wild flowers and an interest in their accurate identification, initially among children. It soon expanded to include adults as well. Its formal aims are to:

- promote a greater knowledge of field botany among the general public and in particular among young people;
- advance education in matters relating to the conservation of wild flowers and the countryside;
- promote the conservation of the British flora.

The Society has a regional branch structure, field meetings in all parts of Britain and Ireland including all the surrounding islands, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands (this area will be referred to as Britain and Ireland in the remainder of the document). It communicates with members through its magazine, website and social media, in particular its Facebook Page.

A unique feature of the Wild Flower Society is its publication of the *Field Botanist's Record Book* which members are encouraged to use to record their observations of wild flowers.

Branches

On joining the Society, adult members are allocated to **regional branches**.

Under 18s join the **Juniors Branch**. Junior members turning 18 on or before 31st August move into a regional branch for the following calendar year.

Parnassus is a separate branch for those members who have recorded over 2000 wild plants in Britain and Ireland and wish to continue to record and report their plant finds.

Each branch has a Branch Secretary whose role is to encourage members and help them with their field botany. Most Branch Secretaries welcome correspondence during the year and will respond to identification queries. A list of branches and secretaries appears in the Society's Year Book and on its website http://www.thewildflowersociety.org.uk/

Meetings

The Society's Annual General Meeting is held as part of a September Members' Weekend with associated field meetings, a photographic competition, plant ID quizzes and other activities. There is an annual programme of **online** and **field meetings**. The online meetings take place during autumn and winter and the field meetings mostly in spring and summer. Details of these are given in the Society's Year Book and on its website
http://www.thewildflowersociety.org.uk/
Members may bring guests to any meeting, if it isn't fully booked.
All persons attending meetings do so at their own risk. Members are encouraged to volunteer to lead field meetings.

The Society may also promote wild flowers and publicise its activities at public events. Any members interested in attending and helping at such an event should contact the Publicity Secretary.

Recording

The *Field Botanist's Record Book* and the *Beginner's Diary*

The main yearly activity for members is keeping the *Field Botanist's Record Book* (formerly known as, and still often called the WFS diary). The record book lists the names of 1000 of the commoner (and a few rarer) plants of Britain and Ireland likely to be readily identified by amateurs and has blank pages on which to enter additional taxa (species, sub-species or hybrids). It is available in print or in downloadable form from our website. Alternatively, members may prefer to keep their records in the form of a spreadsheet or as a list as long as the details mentioned below are included.

The *Beginner's Diary* includes nearly 160 of the commonest wild flowers, giving habitat information for each species and identification tips.
Members may, of course, use their record book, diary or list however they like but if they want their plant recording to be monitored and reported on in the *Wild Flower Magazine* they should follow the guidelines below.

Completing the *Field Botanist's Record Book* and records in other forms

The main purpose of the record book is to encourage people to improve their wild flower and fern identification skills. Over the years many people have found it a useful and enjoyable way of doing so. It provides a record of what plants you have seen and when and where you saw them. It will also make you familiar with the minimum requirements for a biological record: what was seen, where, when and by whom.

The following details about each plant recorded should be included: Scientific (Latin) and English names, date seen, where found (giving the location including the county). Other details we recommend including, especially for less common plants, are: if not seen in flower, whether recognised from the fruit or the leaves; brief details of the habitat; whether seen on an organised meeting or otherwise identified with someone else's help.

You should only record a plant if you are satisfied that you have correctly identified it. If you have been shown it by somebody else, for example on a field meeting, you should aim to have understood what is distinctive about it so that you would have a good chance of recognising it again. Plant identification apps may be used to point you in the right direction but you should always cross reference any identification they make with the descriptions or keys in a field guide or flora.

Especially for a beginner, many plants can only easily be identified from their flowers but that is not always the case. For example, docks are easier to distinguish when they are fruiting as are our two native species of oak. Ferns and similar plants do not have flowers at all and you won't need to see its flowers to identify Holly. If you have had help from a more experienced botanist to identify a particular plant, please make a note in your record book.

Plants entered in the record book should be growing in the wild i.e. unplanted and uncultivated where you saw them and have been seen in Britain or Ireland. We appreciate that it may not always be easy to tell if an individual plant has been planted or not! Branch Secretaries should be able to offer advice.

It can be good practice to start a new list each year, especially when starting out in botany, to refresh and reinforce what you learnt last year. However, that is entirely up to you and, if it suits you better, you can just record your additional finds each year. Please indicate to your Branch Secretary which option you have chosen.

Any plant can be recorded if it appears as a numbered or lettered plant in the latest edition of Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*. If you do not have access to a copy of this, in almost all cases, the plants which you find, for example, in an illustrated field guide, will be in the *New Flora*, though it is possible that the name will be different. Your Branch Secretary will be able to point out any exceptions.

In most cases you will be aiming to identify the species of plant (the numbered plants in the *New Flora*) but, in some cases, this can be very difficult and the record book allows you to enter a record of an aggregate covering a group of similar plants. Examples include Eyebright *Euphrasia* agg. and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. If later you learn to distinguish individual species within one of these aggregates, you can amend your list but, if counting the number of species etc seen you should not count the aggregate as well as one or more individual species. Species of Bramble *Rubus*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* and Hawkweed *Hieracium* are so numerous and difficult to distinguish that they should only be recorded if confirmed by an expert in the genus.

You can record hybrids listed in the *New Flora* if confident of their identification.
The lettered plants in the *New Flora* are subspecies. You may choose not to distinguish these and just record the species. As with the aggregates, if you later decide to record a subspecies, you should not count the species as well. In some cases, where all except one subspecies are restricted in their distribution or very distinctive, it will be reasonable to assume that what you have already recorded was the common subspecies. For example, Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia* has one very widespread subspecies, ssp. *serpyllifolia*, and one, ssp. *humifusa*, only found on mountains in the Scottish Highlands. On the other hand, Ivy-leaved Speedwell *Veronica hederifolia* has two widespread subspecies so, if you record the species, you cannot later assume which subspecies it was.

Recording by junior members
Junior members may keep either an annual *Beginner's Diary* or a *Field Botanist's Record Book* (or equivalent electronic list). These should be submitted by 31st January each year. Junior members submitting a Diary or list will receive a badge for the number of plant species found (25, 50, 100, 150, 200 or more). You are encouraged to start a new list each year to refresh and reinforce what you learnt in earlier years, but when this is not possible, for example in a year when you are busy with exams, you could just record new additions.

Recording in Parnassus
On recording 2000 taxa (species, sub-species or hybrids) members may join Parnassus where they need not confine their records to those detailed in Stace's *New Flora* but may count any taxon (species, sub-species, hybrid, named variety, cultivated variety or forma) found wild in Britain and Ireland. Members in regional branches may note such taxa for retrospective counting upon entry to Parnassus.

Records for each year should be sent as a list or spreadsheet and, as a minimum, should include: scientific name, date, habitat and location information (including county).
Records of taxa not in Stace's *New Flora* should be submitted with a literature reference to

show that the name is valid. Critical taxa and any which are difficult to identify should be validated by an expert botanist.

Members not in Parnassus finding plants wild in Britain and Ireland which are not in Stace's *New Flora* may report them to the **Exotics** Secretary who will also report them in the Magazine.

Submission of your Field Botanist's Record

Branch Secretaries should receive your Record Book by 31st January each year. Excel spreadsheets or other records can be sent by email, or you can send your record book by post, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope SAE for its return.

When you send your records, please:

· count the number of taxa (species, subspecies, microspecies or hybrids) that you have recorded;

· enclose a covering letter reporting highlights of your botanical year;

· enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of your record book.

Those members maintaining a cumulative list of plants they have seen need only send a list of additions each year. This may be submitted as an e-mail attachment as a word list or excel spreadsheet.

Please remember that all plants entered in a Record Book must be included in Stace's *New Flora* 4th Edition (full numbered or lettered entries) with names cited as in Stace's 4th edition.

New Record Books are available from the Membership Secretary, Sue Poyser.

The Excel diary was updated in 2019 to be compatible with Stace 4, with updated names for some species.

Seasonal Recording Activities

The **Spring Week Hunt** is for plants found in flower during the first seven days of March. Ferns and fern allies are excluded.

The **Autumn Week Hunt** is for plants found in flower, ferns in spore or horsetails in cone during the last seven days of October.

The **Winter Months Hunt** is for plants found in flower, ferns in spore or horsetails in cone during December, January and February.

All wild plants recorded for these seasonal activities must be in Stace's *New Flora.*

Analysis of plant records from these hunts has contributed data towards climate change studies.

Other activities

The **One Kilometre Square Survey** is for recording all plants found growing wild in a 1km by 1km square (monad) of the Ordnance Survey grid.

The **Ten Kilometre Square Survey** is for recording all plants found growing wild in a 10km by 10km square (hectad) of the Ordnance Survey grid.

Both surveys are cumulative, i.e. only new plants found are added each year. All wild plants may be recorded, irrespective of whether or not they appear in Stace's *New Flora* but, as in Parnassus, confirmation of identification should be provided for difficult to identify plants and a literature reference given for plants not in Stace.

A **photographic competition** is held annually in association with the Annual General Meeting.

The *Year Book*
The *Year Book* is published at the beginning of each year and contains details of the year's programme of meetings, information about the above activities as well as the contact details of Branch and Competition Secretaries and officers of the Executive Committee.

The Magazine
The ***Wild Flower Magazine*** is published four times a year, in spring, summer, autumn and winter. The magazine contains reports on field meetings and members' record books, articles about specific plant species and places of botanical interest, means to aid identification and articles of general botanical interest. All members are encouraged to contribute articles, photos or illustrations. If two members wish to share a copy of the magazine, one may pay a reduced subscription.

The Website
The society's website http://www.thewildflowersociety.org.uk/ provides up-to-date information about the society including the programme of forthcoming field and online meetings, reports of past meetings and other activities and a downloadable version of the *Field Botanist's Record Book.* There are also useful links to other websites of botanical interest.

The Society may also use social media accounts such as Facebook to promote its activities.

Grant giving
The Executive Committee approves grants to other organisations and individuals to further the Society's aims. In particular these grants support the running of botanical identification training courses, wild flower activities for children, families and young people, the attendance of young people at FSC botanical identification courses, the production of publications on wild flowers and ferns and botanical research projects based on the flora of Britain and Ireland. The amount available for grants is determined under the reserves policy set by the Executive Committee. Guidance about applying for grants may be sought from the website, the Grants Officer, the General Secretary or the Treasurer.

The Dent Award is an annual award of £50, available to a young person aged 11 – 18 who has made an outstanding contribution to a wild flower conservation project run by a Wildlife Trust or similar organisation.

Subscriptions, etc.
Applications to join the Society and payments for subscriptions, record books, etc. can either be made via the website http://www.thewildflowersociety.org.uk/ or by contacting the Wild Flower Society Membership Secretary, 43 Roebuck Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 1EU, e-mail: wildflowermembership@yahoo.co.uk

These regulations will come into force after the Annual General Meeting on 6 September 2025 and will supersede all earlier versions.