

IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

How healthy is your meadow?

Use this card to help you identify what's in your meadow. Here are some top tips for identifying meadow plants.

1. **Check the colour and shape of the flower**, and count how many petals it has.
2. **Look at the leaves**. What is their shape and size? What are the leaf edges like? Are there any hairs?
3. **Look at the stem**. What shape is it? Are there any hairs? How are the leaves arranged around the stem?

Record your **results** on the accompanying **activity sheet**.



ACTIVITY 1.



Nettle patch

Nettles and thistles



Creeping thistle

Don't confuse thistles with knapweed - knapweed is not prickly, as you will see overleaf



Common nettle

ACTIVITY 2.

Grazing livestock



Sheep wool left on fences



Sheep grazing



Cattle



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ACTIVITY 3.

Meadow leaf shapes

Different plants have different shapes of leaves. Look for different colours, textures and shapes.

Plantain leaf

- these are smooth and boat shaped and sit low to the ground, the flower sits tall like a ship's mast.



Vetchling leaves

- are pinnate - made up of lots of leaflets.

Ox-eye daisy leaf

ACTIVITY 4 and 5.

Meadow grasses

Grasses such as Yorkshire fog are associated with grassland and meadows that have been managed traditionally.

Sweet vernal grass

- spikelets of flowers with quite broad leaves. Has a sweet smell on the base of the flower.

Yorkshire fog

- tufty, soft spikelets can be grey\purple in colour and are a food source for some meadow butterflies.

Did you know that the base of the stems are striped red and are referred to as 'striped pajamas'? A key identification feature!

Sweet vernal grass

Yorkshire fog

Rye-grass

- is a sign that meadows have been improved. This means that wild flowers may have disappeared. The leaves are flat and can be long with a shiny underside.

Rye-grass

"Fodder is vegetation including grasses and wild plants which is cut from meadows and fed to livestock".



ACTIVITY 6.

Yellow rattle

Yellow rattle usually appears in meadows between May and July. This important meadow plant may be a good indication that a meadow is quite healthy as it helps other meadow plants to thrive.

Yellow rattle

- seeds "rattle" inside yellow capsules when ripe. Jagged, pointy leaves.

ACTIVITY 7.

Meadow flowers



Bird's foot-trefoil

- sometimes known as eggs and bacon - can you see why? This is a very common meadow flower and a popular source of nectar.



Meadow buttercup

- look at the leaves shaped like the palm of your hand - these are called palmate leaves.



Ox-eye daisy

- a good sign that summer has arrived - they tend to bloom around midsummer.



Tufted vetch

- tufted vetch has curling tendrils that it uses for climbing and gripping - it often climbs over hedges.



Meadow vetchling



ACTIVITY 7.



Common spotted orchid

- look out for the spotty leaves. There may be other types of orchid in your meadow. All orchids have similar shaped flowers.

"I'm particularly attracted to the purple flowers on this page as I can see the petals clearly and they are rich in nectar"



Field scabious

- large but quite flat, mauve flowers, rich in nectar. Can you see the tiny anthers floating above the flower head?



Common knapweed

- knapweed is not prickly like a thistle. Likely to take over in an un-managed meadow. Bees and butterflies love this hairy plant. Look out for the round base of the flower head topped with a mop of pinky-red.



Red clover



Self-heal - look close to the ground for these tiny plants with purple flower heads. Self heal is a member of the mint family.

"Enjoy looking at the wild flowers but be careful not to trample over them or pick them."



The meadow brown butterfly enjoys feeding on meadow flowers including buttercups and field scabious.



(c) Wilfbuck

Meadow brown butterfly