

# Bird's-foot Trefoil

*Lotus corniculatus*

Plants · In flower May–Sep



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A low, sprawling perennial of short grassland with small trefoil leaves and clusters of yellow pea flowers, often streaked and flushed with orange-red in bud — the eggs-and-bacon of its country name. The seed pods radiate from a point like the toes of a bird's foot. It is common on verges, dunes, unimproved grassland and thin soils around Dumfries.

## BEHAVIOUR

This is one of the most important wildlife plants in British grassland: it is the foodplant of the common blue butterfly and of the six-spot burnet moth, and a major nectar source for bumblebees. Like other legumes it fixes nitrogen through root nodules. The foliage contains small amounts of cyanide compounds, which deter some grazers.

## WHEN TO SEE IT

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## QUICK FACTS

|        |                                               |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------|
| FAMILY | Peas (Fabaceae)                               |
| HEIGHT | 10–40 cm, sprawling                           |
| STATUS | Native; common, and a key butterfly foodplant |

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