

Wood Sorrel

Oxalis acetosella

Plants · In flower Apr–May



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A delicate, low woodland perennial with trefoil leaves of three heart-shaped leaflets, bright yellow-green and slightly translucent, and solitary white flowers finely veined with lilac. Wood sorrel grows in shaded, damp, mossy places — the floor of oak and conifer woodland, banks, rotting stumps — and is common in the wooded ground around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

The leaflets fold downward against the stalk at night, in heavy rain and in strong sun, a movement driven by changes in water pressure at the leaf base. The plant produces two kinds of flower: showy spring ones for cross-pollination, and later inconspicuous ones that never open and self-fertilise, guaranteeing seed. The leaves taste sharply of lemon, from oxalic acid.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Wood sorrels (Oxalidaceae)
HEIGHT	5–15 cm
STATUS	Native; common in shaded, mossy woodland

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