

Out this month — September

Plants to look for in and around Dumfries · 73 species

☐		Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	The tree that holds the riverbank together — and the only broadleaf here with little woody cones.
☐		Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Sooty-black buds in winter — and a tree now facing a disease that may take most of them.
☐		Bird's-foot Trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Eggs and bacon — yellow flowers streaked red, and seed pods splayed like a bird's foot.
☐		Biting Stonecrop <i>Sedum acre</i>	A mat of gold on a wall top in June — and the leaves are peppery enough to sting the tongue.
☐		Blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Flowers on bare black twigs before any leaf — a cold snap during it is still called a blackthorn winter.
☐		Bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Possibly the most widespread plant on earth, and a single clone can cover a hillside.
☐		Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Not one species but hundreds of near-identical microspecies — and the best free food there is.
☐		Broad Buckler-fern <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Dark scales with a black stripe down the middle — the surest way to name it.
☐		Butterbur <i>Petasites hybridus</i>	Flowers first on bare pink spikes, then grows leaves big enough to have wrapped butter.
☐		Cladonia Cup Lichen <i>Cladonia fimbriata</i>	Tiny grey-green golf tees standing up out of the moss — miniature and easily missed.
☐		Common Butterfly Bush <i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Feeds butterflies magnificently and wrecks masonry thoroughly — both at once.
☐		Common Comfrey <i>Symphytum officinale</i>	Knitbone — and short-tongued bumblebees simply bite a hole in the back of the flower.
☐		Common Haircap Moss <i>Polytrichum commune</i>	One of the tallest mosses in the world, and it has something close to plumbing.
☐		Common Knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Hardhead — a thistle-like flower with no prickles at all, and the best nectar on the verge.
☐		Common Nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>	The sting is a hypodermic needle made of glass — and four of our best butterflies depend on it.
☐		Common Orange Lichen <i>Xanthoria parietina</i>	The bright orange crust on a wall or gravestone — and it thrives on nitrogen pollution.

☐		Common Polypody <i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Grows along the tops of walls and out of tree branches, with no soil to speak of.
☐		Common Ragwort <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	Poisonous to horses, and indispensable to a great many insects — both things are true.
☐		Common Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i>	The tallest grass in Britain, and the plant that builds an entire habitat around itself.
☐		Common Valerian <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	The root smells so strongly of old socks that cats react to it like catnip.
☐		Cow Parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Queen Anne's lace — the froth of white that fills every verge in May.
☐		Devil's-bit Scabious <i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Named for a root that looks bitten off — the devil, allegedly, being annoyed at how useful it was.
☐		Dog Rose <i>Rosa canina</i>	Pale pink, faintly scented, and armed with hooked thorns that climb by hanging on.
☐		Dog's Mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	A dull green carpet with a rank smell — and thoroughly poisonous.
☐		Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Grows anywhere the ground has been disturbed, and gives two harvests a year.
☐		Foxglove <i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	The source of the heart drug digoxin — and lethally poisonous straight off the plant.
☐		Giant Hogweed <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	Its sap causes severe burns that recur in sunlight for years. Do not touch it.
☐		Goat Willow <i>Salix caprea</i>	The pussy willow — silver-grey buds that turn into the first real bee food of the year.
☐		Gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i>	'When gorse is out of blossom, kissing's out of fashion' — because it is never entirely out of flower.
☐		Great Willowherb <i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Codlins-and-cream — soft-hairy all over, with notched purple-pink petals and a white centre.
☐		Harebell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	The bluebell of Scotland — and nothing at all to do with the woodland bluebell.
☐		Hart's-tongue Fern <i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	The only common fern here with undivided strap-shaped fronds — no lacework at all.
☐		Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	The may tree — and the hedge that encloses most of the fields around Dumfries.
☐		Hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>	Lambs' tails in January, and nuts in autumn that half the wood is waiting for.

☐		Hemlock Water-dropwort <i>Oenanthe crocata</i>	Probably the most poisonous plant in Britain — and it looks like celery.
☐		Herb Robert <i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Ferny leaves that turn bright red in poor ground, and a smell most people dislike.
☐		Himalayan Balsam <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	Fires its seeds several metres when touched — which is exactly why it owns the riverbank.
☐		Hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Coarser and later than cow parsley — and its sap can still blister you in sunshine.
☐		Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Only the female trees carry berries — and the upper leaves often lose their prickles entirely.
☐		Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Saves its scent for the evening, when the moths it needs are flying.
☐		Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i>	Flowers when almost nothing else does, and fruits when the birds most need it.
☐		Japanese Knotweed <i>Reynoutria japonica</i>	Almost every plant in Britain is female, and genetically one single clone.
☐		Lady Fern <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Finer, softer and more delicate than male fern — and one of the first to collapse in autumn.
☐		Male Fern <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	The classic shuttlecock fern of a shady bank — and named only in contrast to the 'female' lady fern.
☐		Marsh Marigold <i>Caltha palustris</i>	Kingcups — big glossy gold flowers in the wet, and one of our oldest surviving natives.
☐		Meadow Buttercup <i>Ranunculus acris</i>	The gloss on the petals is a mirror — which is why it really does shine under your chin.
☐		Meadowsweet <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	The plant that gave aspirin both its chemistry and, indirectly, its name.
☐		Navelwort (Wall Pennywort) <i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Round fleshy leaves dimpled in the middle like a navel — a succulent growing out of a wall.
☐		Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage <i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>	A low golden-green mat on wet, shaded ground — and its flowers have no petals at all.
☐		Ox-eye Daisy <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	The moon daisy — a big white daisy that glows on a verge at dusk.
☐		Oxford Ragwort <i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Escaped from a botanic garden and rode the railway network across Britain.
☐		Pedunculate Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	Acorns on long stalks, leaves on almost none — the mirror image of the sessile oak.

☐		Primrose <i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Comes in two forms — pin-eyed and thrum-eyed — so a flower can never pollinate itself.
☐		Purple Loosestrife <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Tall magenta spikes along the water's edge — and three different flower forms in one species.
☐		Red Campion <i>Silene dioica</i>	Male and female flowers on separate plants — and only the females make seed.
☐		Red Clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Only long-tongued bumblebees can reach the nectar — which is why they matter to farming.
☐		Reed Canary-grass <i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	The tall grass that takes over a riverbank — greener, earlier and looser than common reed.
☐		Rosebay Willowherb <i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Fireweed — it swept across bombed cities and burnt ground within a single generation.
☐		Rowan <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Planted by doorways for centuries to keep witches out — and stripped by thrushes every autumn.
☐		Rustyback Fern <i>Asplenium ceterach</i>	Turn a frond over and the underside is covered in rust-coloured scales.
☐		Scots Pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Britain's only native pine — orange bark in the crown, and needles in neat pairs.
☐		Selfheal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Survives mowing by simply flowering lower — you will find it in the middle of a lawn.
☐		Sessile Oak <i>Quercus petraea</i>	The oak of the western hanging woods — acorns sit tight to the twig, leaves have long stalks.
☐		Silver Birch <i>Betula pendula</i>	White bark, weeping twigs, and the first tree back on any patch of bare ground.
☐		Water Forget-me-not <i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>	The flower spike uncoils as it opens, like a scorpion's tail — hence the name.
☐		Water Mint <i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Walk along a wet ditch in August and you will smell it before you see it.
☐		White Clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>	The clover in your lawn — and the one people search for a fourth leaf on.
☐		Wild Teasel <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Its paired leaves hold a cup of rainwater — and goldfinches work the seedheads all winter.
☐		Wood Avens <i>Geum urbanum</i>	Also called herb bennet — and its burred seedheads are how it gets around.
☐		Wood Sorrel <i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	Shamrock-shaped leaves that fold down flat at night and in bright sun.



Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*

Our only certainly native elm, and Scotland still holds mature trees that England largely lost.



Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Feathery leaves and flat white flower heads — a battlefield wound herb since antiquity.



Yellow Flag Iris *Iris pseudacorus*

Almost certainly the flower behind the fleur-de-lis.

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