

## PLANTS AND FERNS

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Some long lists provided this year have included a few potential new plant species for the island and the rediscovery of some which have not been seen for many years. The lists also include some non-native species and garden escapes which have become established in a few spots.

Eye-catching flowers like the **African Corn-lily** *Ixia maculata* cannot be overlooked when in flower, but its slender stems and grass-like leaves make it very inconspicuous for most of the year. A few specimens can be found near the path above Millcombe House, but it does not seem to have spread elsewhere. The shrubby **Red Escallonia** *Escallonia rubra* is a native of mountain slopes in the Andes in Chile and Argentina and is a very tough plant. It is popular for hedging because of its robust nature and can be invasive in places but it seems not to be spreading on Lundy. Much more common and well-established in the shelter of Millcombe is the **Hardy Fuchsia** *Fuchsia magellanica* whose flowers are a huge attraction to bees in the late summer. **Creeping Yellow Sorrel** *Oxalis corniculata* is found among the cobble stones around Millcombe House where it has been established for many years, but a second alien species, **Upright Yellow Sorrel** *Oxalis stricta*, seems to have found its way to Lundy. In greenhouses and very sheltered areas on the mainland this can be an invasive species so the presence of this plant will need to be monitored.

One of the earliest native species recorded in flower was **Early Scurvy-grass** *Cochlearia danica* which can be found in many rocky places, including on walls and paths in the village areas. Early in the season the plants are very low-growing and compact, but as the season advances they become larger and more obvious with elongated flower stalks. The heart-shaped lower leaves are glossy and slightly fleshy.

Many of the island's native species are small and inconspicuous but some keen



▲ African Corn-lily *Ixia maculata* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller).



▲ Upright Yellow Sorrel *Oxalis stricta* (photo: Andrew Cleave).



▲ Sea Storksbill *Erodium maritimum* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller).



▲ Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller).



▲ Buck's Horn plantain *Plantago coronopus* (photo: Andrew Cleave).

photographers managed to find and photograph a number of these in 2024. One of the most overlooked species is **Sea Storksbill** *Erodium maritimum* which has tiny flowers, sometimes without petals. It is actually very common on Lundy, but quite scarce in many mainland coastal areas. Its preferred habitat is open, gravelly areas, and the tops of walls, where it does not have to compete with more vigorous species.

**Bird's-foot** *Ornithopus perpusillus*, a very small and creeping member of the pea family, is often overlooked but occasionally vigorous specimens are found, especially in areas newly colonised where there is no competition with other species. Usually entirely prostrate, this year some very large specimens were found with dense masses of flowers.

**Buck's-horn Plantain** *Plantago coronopus* is a very common plant on Lundy, but most specimens are really small, forming tiny rosettes on bare ground. Occasionally specimens grow on rock faces where there is no risk of trampling or grazing and then the plant can be much larger, with its leaves looking more like the 'Buck's Horn' – i.e. the antlers of the Fallow Deer – which give the plant its English name. The scientific species name of '*coronopus*' refers to the crown-shaped arrangement of the flowers.

A very familiar plant on the walls of Lundy is **Pennywort** *Umbilicus rupestris* but less common is the unrelated **Marsh Pennywort** *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* which grows in damp flushes, pond margins and streams. The leaves bear a superficial resemblance to the Pennywort which grows on the walls, but the

plants are from separate families. Marsh Pennywort is more closely related to members of the Carrot family. It produces tiny flowers on slender stalks which require a hands-and-knees search to find them. Another very small species found in the same damp habitats is **Blinks** *Montia fontana* which forms bright green patches of foliage. The small white 5-petalled flowers sit among the slightly fleshy, spoon-shaped leaves and appear in early spring. **Allseed** *Linum radiola* which has minute white flowers on thread-like stems, usually at their best in late spring and early summer, is also found in wet areas of close-cropped turf. It often forms small dense cushions and is tricky to spot when not in flower. However, it is often a good indicator of where to look for Lundy's smallest fern **Small Adder's-tongue** *Ophioglossum azoricum* which was reported from many sites on the west side in 2024. A more conspicuous species of wetter areas is **Round-leaved Crowfoot** *Ranunculus omiophyllum*, a member of the buttercup family with white flowers. It grows well in

the ditches near Quarter Wall gate, but can be found in many wet flushes and streams. One of the more obvious plants of wetter areas is **Lousewort** *Pedicularis sylvatica* with short spikes of pink-purple flowers and joined sepals which inflate around the flower after pollination. At the south end, on the exposed slopes below Rocket Pole Pond, many of the specimens were only a few centimetres tall, but in more sheltered spots some taller plants were found, including some pale-flowered examples.

A plant which has not been seen for a few years is **Wild Madder** *Rubia peregrina* but some photographs revealed this to be present on the east side. It is a scrambling, evergreen perennial and can be a bit tricky to spot among brambles or Honeysuckle, but it does produce clusters of black berries in the autumn and may be more obvious then.

There are old records for both **Hard Shield-fern** *Polystichum aculeatum* and **Soft Shield-fern** *P. setiferum*, but neither species has been verified for many years. Both species are quite common along lanes and hedgerows in north Devon so it is possible that one or both could still be present on Lundy. There are unverified reports from 2024 of Soft Shield-fern amongst the trees below Brambles Villa so this needs to be checked in 2025. During the seabird season many visitors made their way down to the Battery to watch the Puffins and a



▲ Blinks *Montia fontana* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller).



▲ Allseed *Linum radiola* (photo: Andrew Cleave)



▲ Small Adder's-tongue *Ophiglossum azoricum* (photo: Andrew Cleave)



▲ Marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller).



▲ Round-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculum omiophyllum* (photo: Sam Pitt Miller)



▲ Wild Madder *Rubia peregrina* (photo: Andrew Cleave).



▲ Sea Spleenwort *Asplenium maritimum*  
(photo: Andrew Cleave).

number of them remarked on the fine display of **Sea Spleenwort** *Asplenium maritimum*, seemingly growing out of solid rock. It is one of our hardiest ferns and is tolerant of salt spray so is often found on exposed coastal rocks where few other plants could survive.

For entries in the LFS Logbook it is helpful to have your name and contact details so we can follow up any queries. Please leave as much indication as possible of where you found things. Photographs and enquiries can be sent to [botany@lundy.org.uk](mailto:botany@lundy.org.uk)