

FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS

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We are very grateful to the many observers who entered their findings in the Tavern Logbook in 2025. We have been able to compile a list of well over 170 species of flowering plants and ferns which were spotted by visitors this year. The 2025 species list can be found at <https://www.lundy.org.uk/records/2025>.

The earliest plant records were entered in the first week of January when a few **Primroses** *Primula vulgaris* were found in flower in St Helen's Copse, and in the last week of the year **Wavy Bittercress** *Cardamine flexuosa* was seen still flowering in Millcombe.

The New Year Plant Hunt for the Botanical Society of the British Isles yielded only a few records on 1 January. The ubiquitous **European Gorse** *Ulex europaea* was the most prominent, but a few other species were found to be in flower in sheltered parts of Millcombe, including **Daisy** *Bellis perennis*, **Dandelion** *Taraxacum* agg., **Red Campion** *Silene dioica* and **Common Field Speedwell** *Veronica persica*.

There were plenty of records later in the year of common and familiar species such as **Sea Campion** *Silene uniflora*, **Thrift** *Armeria maritima* and **Sheep's-bit** *Jasione montana*, but some keen observers also reported less familiar species like **Heath Milkwort**, which requires close examination to be sure of its identity, or **Western Clover** *Trifolium occidentale* which has a very limited distribution on Lundy. **Field Woundwort** *Stachys arvensis* was probably once more common on the island when there was more cultivation, but is now confined to a few spots on the slopes above the beach road where the soil is sometimes disturbed.

Grasses rarely get a mention in the logbook, but a study of some of the walls around the south end revealed a very varied flora with some species that are rarely seen in any other habitat. These include **Sea Fern Grass** *Catapodium marinum*, a small, stiff grass which flattens itself against the wall. By late summer it appears to be dry and shrivelled, but its seeds will already have been lodged in crevices ready for next year. Ferns are also often overlooked but, on some walls, small colonies of **Wall Rue** *Asplenium ruta-muraria* seem to be increasing slightly. Safe from grazing and trampling, small ferns like this stand a much better chance of survival high up on a wall. Look for this fern on the high wall opposite Barton Cottages where there are also good colonies of **Maidenhair Spleenwort** *Asplenium trichomanes*.

Two new species were added to the Lundy flora lists in 2025, although one of them has already disappeared. **Soft Shield Fern** *Polystichum setiferum* was found under the trees below Brambles East, in a typical location in which it might be found on the mainland where it is quite common. It has probably been overlooked there for several years, growing on a very steep bank in the shade of the trees. In April a single clump of **Ramsons** *Allium ursinum* was spotted beneath trees further along the east side, again in a typical location, but sadly this was soon dug up and destroyed, a policy of eradication (due to its fondness for spreading) that has now been discontinued. It had apparently been spotted there in April 2024 as well, but not reported in the log book.

Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris* always provides a good splash of colour in summer and is common in the village area and near Benjamin's Chair, but **Tree Mallow** *Malva arborea*, a much larger and more robust species, is actually harder to find. It seems there is only one specimen of this plant on Lundy, growing in a precarious position on the cliffs on the west side. If you are bird-watching and have your binoculars trained on the cliffs please look out for more specimens of Tree Mallow and record the location in the log book.

Most visitors do not give **Common Ivy** *Hedera helix* a second glance and are probably unaware that we have two species in Britain. **Atlantic Ivy** *Hedera hibernica* is more common in western Britain and we have both species on Lundy. Distinguishing between them is rather tricky, but Atlantic Ivy tends to have broader leaves with less marbling than those of Common Ivy. Another difference is in the scent of the crushed leaves which have a rather unpleasant smell in Common Ivy, whereas Atlantic Ivy leaves have a stronger, not-unpleasant resinous smell when crushed. Further differences can be best detected with a hand-lens, when the tiny hairs on the underside of the leaves can be seen to be either flat on the surface in Atlantic Ivy, or projecting from it in Common Ivy. Both species can be found in Millcombe.

Despite very dry conditions later in the summer the area around Pondsburry produced its usual fine display of **Bog Asphodel** *Narthecium ossifragum* and **Common Cotton Grass** *Eriophorum angustifolium*, and good numbers of **Heath Spotted Orchids** *Dactylorhiza maculata*, which seem to be confined to this one spot. Older records show that this species was once more widespread on the top of the island. From a distance the orchids are not very obvious, but they grow well in the shelter of the tussocks of **Purple Moor-grass** *Molinia caerulea*. In the more open areas nearby the ground cover is dominated by extensive patches of **Creeping Willow** *Salix repens*, which looks very striking when the small yellow catkins appear in the spring, but is overlooked for much of the year.

Please continue to add your records to the Tavern Log Book. It is helpful if you can list the English and Scientific names and give details of the location. Photographs of unusual species are always welcome and can be sent to andrew@bramleyfrith.co.uk



▲ Navel Wort (*Umbilicus rupestris*) garden wall, lower Millcombe (photo: John Hedger)