



Wildlife Trusts Wales

Yellow-rattle Rhinanthus minor

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Species information

i **Common name**
Yellow-rattle

Latin name
Rhinanthus minor

Category
Wildflowers

Statistics
Height: up to 45cm

Conservation status
Common.

About

The brown, purse-like calyxes (containing the sepals) of Yellow-rattle give this plant its common name - brush through a wildflower meadow at the height of summer and you'll hear the tiny seeds rattling in their pods. This annual plant thrives in grasslands, living a semi-parasitic life by feeding off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses. For this reason, it was once seen as an indicator of poor grassland by farmers, but is now often used to turn improved grassland back to meadow; it feeds off the vigorous grasses, eventually allowing more delicate species to push their way through.

How to identify

Yellow-rattle has yellow, tube-like flowers protruding from an inflated, green calyx, which appear May to September. It has serrated leaves with heavy, dark veins, which sprout opposite each other all the way up the stem. Its stems have black spots.

Where to find it

Widespread.

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When to find it



How can people help

Once awash with wildflowers and alive with insects, our hay meadows have been drained, damaged and destroyed as a result of agricultural intensification; more than 95% of our wildflower meadows have been lost in recent years. Without care, those meadows that are left can quickly become overgrown, shading out delicate wildflowers. The Wildlife Trusts look after many meadow habitats using traditional methods, such as hay-cutting, reseeding and grazing, for the benefit of local wildlife. We are also working closely with farmers and landowners to promote wildlife-friendly practices in these areas. You can help too: volunteer for your local Wildlife Trust and you could be involved in everything from stockwatching to surveying meadow flowers.

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