



# PLANT FAMILIES OF THE WEEK

Here is a little bit of information about a few of the plant families that might be found in gardens



Plants belonging to the **DAISY FAMILY** include those with flowerheads like those of daisies (as the name suggests), as well as dandelions and thistles. The flowerheads are made up of densely packed tiny flowers (called 'FLORETS') that have different shapes: eg. inner disk florets (round) and outer ray florets (elongated). From a distance, what might look like a single flower, is actually a 'composite cluster' of smaller individual flowers. In fact, another name for this family is 'Composites'. And what might look like the petals of the flower, actually is the outermost ring of the densely packed inner circle of florets. We hold a total of **14,162 records** for the daisy family (last 10 years), which isn't as many as we'd like. Perhaps this is because the family includes so many common species which people aren't so interested in recording? Top scorers in this family include the **dandelion** (1825); creeping thistle (1422), common ragwort (1359); daisy (1,120) and spear thistle (897).

The **ROSE FAMILY** includes herbs, shrubs and trees, such as bramble, hawthorn, various types of roses, as well as many fruit trees like apple, cherry, pear and plum (wild). Flowers of Rose family plants are fairly easy to identify as most have **five 'sepals' and five 'petals'**. They are also 'actinomorphic', which means they are **radially symmetric**. Plants of the rose family produce a variety of fruits, including false as well as fleshy fruits, dry seeds, capsules and follicles. We hold **13,240 records** from this family (last 10 years). At the top, we have **hawthorn** (3587), followed by bramble (1693); buckthorn (1019), rowan (931) and wood avens (or Herb Bennet) (797).



The **PEA FAMILY** is one of the largest families of flowering plants. The name originates from its seedpods, which are shaped like that of a pea pod. Pea family flowers have a very **unusual** but very beautiful shape: one large back petal, two side petals (also called 'wings') and two lower petals that are fused together to form a keel. Pea family representative you're quite likely to see in your garden include various **clover species** like white and red clover (use a hand lens if you have one and look at their tiny flowers!). You might have also come across gorse, which has beautiful yellow flowers but is very spikey – ideal habitat for many little critters, such as froghoppers! Records gathered for this family since 2010 add up to a **total of 6608**. At the top of the list we have **white clover** (1228); red clover (740); common bird's foot trefoil (641); gorse (546) and common vetch (464).





# PLANT FAMILIES OF THE WEEK



The **MINT FAMILY** is made up of dead-nettles, mints and thymes. Their most distinct characteristic is their **square stem**. Their flowers are often described as 'whorl-like' or 'spike-and-head-like'. This family includes many familiar aromatic culinary herbs like mint, rosemary, lavender and thyme. **Herb gardens** can be very beneficial to many insects as they are a great source of **nectar!** We hold only **3089 mint family records** (since 2010). The most recorded species in this family are **hedge woundwort** (580); selfheal (523); red dead-nettle (291); gypsywort (254) and ground-ivy (244).

The flowers of plants from the **CARROT FAMILY**, or 'UMBELLIFERAS', are small and white or yellow. Plants from this family are easiest to ID when in flower as they **look like little umbrellas** – with little branches arising from the same point and making a canopy. Common species that you could see in your garden include cow parsley, hogweed, fennel and wild carrot. We hold only **4,576 carrot family records** since 2010. The most recorded species is **hogweed** (1,342), followed by cow parsley (1062), giant hogweed (408), ground elder (352) and wild angelica (347).



The **ORCHID FAMILY** is the second largest family of flowering plants. You've probably seen cultivated orchids for sale in garden centres. Wild UK orchids have much small flowers but are equally as strongly irregular and are highly **modified for insect pollination**. Orchids have unique flowers and aren't likely to be confused with any other family of plants. Flowers are arranged in '**spikes**', each of which have a single bract (leaf found at the base of flower stalks). Many orchids are very **distinctive** and therefore easy to ID, such as the bee orchid, common-spotted orchid and pyramidal orchid. The orchid family has a shockingly low number of records since 2010 with only **494 records!** Our top scorers in this family are the **southern marsh-orchid** (147); common spotted-orchid (110), bee orchid (73); broad-leaved helleborine (56) and the northern marsh-orchid (36).

The **GRASS, RUSH and SEDGE** families forms a key component of most plant communities. Use this easy rhyme to differentiate between these three families – '**Sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses are hollow, what have you found?**'. Most sedges have triangular leaves (edges). Of these 3 families, you're most likely to find grasses in your garden, with common species including cock's foot, perennial rye grass, couch grass, timothy and smaller cat's tail. The three families together accumulate a total of **15,434 records** since 2010. **Yorkshire fog** is the top species (1419), followed by cock's foot (1256), soft-rush (1128), perennial rye-grass (1005) and false oat-grass (700) records.

