

Horseshoe vetch

This yellow flowering plant is found only on chalk grassland sites in England.

When the seed pods are ripe they curl to form a horseshoe shape – hence the name!



© Hippocrepis comosa/CC BY-SA

Special feature

3

It has unusual circular flower heads providing pollen

Spot me

2

Found commonly on chalk grassland

Food facts

9

Provides food for bees, insects, chalkhill blue and common blue butterflies

Vital stats

4

Grows to around 10cm tall

Amazing fact!

5

It is the only the only food source for the chalkhill blue butterfly!

Salad Burnet

Salad burnet is a low lying herb found on chalk grassland.

Its flowers are red and speckled and can be seen between May and September.



© Sanguisorba minor/CC BY-SA

Special feature

9

The leaves have an amazing smell of cucumber if crushed or walked on!

Spot me

4

Flowers from May to September

Food facts

4

This is a food plant for the grizzled skipper butterfly

Vital stats

9

Can grow up to 50cm tall

Amazing fact!

8

This herb makes a great addition to salads, summer drinks and herb tea!

Round-headed rampion

The round-headed rampion is a common sight on chalk grassland.

It is easily recognised by its deep blue, almost purple flowers.



© Mary Shorter

Special feature

5

Each flower is actually a collection of small flowers grouped together

Spot me

4

It usually flowers from May to August

Food facts

5

It provides a food source for many insects including hoverflies

Vital stats

7

Grows up to 40cm tall

Amazing fact!

5

It is commonly known as the 'Pride of Sussex' and is also the County flower of Sussex

Common spotted orchid

This is the most common variety of British orchids and grows well on north facing slopes.

It gets its name from the purple spots on its leaves.



Special feature

3

It has a real variety of flower colours ranging from white to pink and purple

Spot me

4

It usually flowers from June to August

Food facts

6

It is particularly attractive to day flying moths

Vital stats

10

Can grow up to 60cm tall

Amazing fact!

4

This orchid grows quickly in newly restored sites

Bee orchid

Bee orchids are self-pollinating orchids in this country.

However, they evolved to look and smell just like a small hairy female bee! This was to attract male bees to pollinate the plants.



© Nick Hearn/SDNPA

Special feature

10

Looks just like a female bee!

Spot me

7

Can be seen flowering in June and July and is very easy to recognise

Food facts

7

Slugs and snails like to eat this orchid – as do sheep!

Vital stats

6

Grows up to 30cm tall

Amazing fact!

7

A single flower is the result of up to eight years growth!

Autumn gentian

This is a biennial plant—this means it makes a rosette of leaves in the first year and flowers in the late summer/autumn of the second year.

The flowers are mauve in colour and look like tubes with a flattened top.



© Andy Horton

Special feature

4

There are between 10-15 flowers on each stem

Spot me

5

Found on chalk grassland. It has purple flowers from July to October

Food facts

8

It provides a good food source for many invertebrates

Vital stats

6

Grows up to 25cm tall

Amazing fact!

9

Gentians have been used throughout history as a medicine for tummy aches!

Wild thyme

Wild thyme is a creeping, low lying shrub that is commonly found on chalk grassland.

It forms a mat covering the ground with hundreds of small purple flowers giving off a wonderful aroma.



© SDNPA

Special feature

8

Produces a wonderful aromatic scent when walked on

Spot me

3

Evergreen shrub found on chalk grassland

Food facts

8

Very attractive to bees and butterflies

Vital stats

2

Grows up to 2cm tall with creeping stems around 10cm long

Amazing fact!

6

Rudyard Kipling called the scent 'dawn in paradise' in his poem 'Sussex'

Adonis blue butterfly

The Adonis blue is a characteristic species of chalk grassland butterfly found over short, grazed grass.

The male has brilliantly coloured blue wings which give it its name, but the female is actually a rich, chocolate brown colour.



© Derek Middleton

Special feature

7

The Adonis blue can recolonise sites up to 10km away

Spot me

8

Found on chalk grassland, this butterfly prefers warm, sunny slopes

Food facts

4

The caterpillar survives by eating horseshoe vetch

Vital stats

3

Wingspan of 3-4cm

Amazing fact!

6

The larvae of the Adonis blue are looked after by ants!

Chalkhill blue butterfly

This is a small blue butterfly found commonly on chalk grassland sites. The males are pale, milky-blue in colour and have a thin brownish black border.

The females are brown with orange spots and a faint blue dusting.



© Neil Hulme

Special feature

3

This is a warmth loving butterfly and is usually found on sunny slopes

Spot me

7

Can be seen flying low above chalk grassland, for six to eight weeks from July to September

Food facts

3

The caterpillars only eat horseshoe vetch

Vital stats

3

Wingspan of 3-4cm

Amazing fact!

4

Large numbers of males may congregate on animal dung to feed on minerals!

Duke of Burgundy butterfly

This is a small, springtime butterfly that likes scrubby grassland sites.

Despite being rare it is responding well to conservation efforts in the South Downs National Park.



© Neil Hulme

Special feature

3

This species of butterfly prefers scrubby grassland and woodland clearings

Spot me

9

It is a rare butterfly that flies from April to June

Food facts

5

Its preferred source of food is cowslip

Vital stats

3

Wingspan of 3cm

Amazing fact!

9

Males are very territorial and can have spectacular aerial 'dog-fights'!

Wart-biter cricket

Wart-biter crickets are usually dark green in colour with the female much larger than the male.

They make a song made up of lots of short clicks which can last for several minutes.



© Graeme Lyons

Special feature

6

Wart-biters usually move around by walking and rarely fly except when scared

Spot me

10

This is a very rare species found on chalk grassland

Food facts

7

Eats plants as well as other insects including grasshoppers

Vital stats

3

Only 3-4cm long

Amazing fact!

10

Used in Sweden in the 1700s to bite warts from peoples skin!

Quaking grass

This is one of the many different species of grasses found on chalk downland.

Other names for it include 'dithery dock', 'jiggle joggles' and 'quakers and shakers'.



© SDNPA

Special feature

4

It has loose flower heads that literally 'quake' or wobble on the stem when blown by the breeze

Spot me

3

Commonly found on chalk grassland, this grass flowers from June to September

Food facts

5

Provides food for caterpillars of the meadow brown butterfly

Vital stats

8

Grows up to 40cm tall

Amazing fact!

3

The flowers of quaking grass look a little like miniature hops

Skylark

Skylarks are small brown birds slightly bigger than a sparrow with a lovely plume on their heads.

They build their nests on the ground in tufts of grass and can be found on farmland and chalk grassland.



© Derek Middleton

Special feature

8

Skylarks sing a beautiful song as they fly

Spot me

6

A nationally declining farmland bird species found on chalk grassland

Food facts

6

Eat seeds and insects

Vital stats

5

14-18cm long

Amazing fact!

7

Skylarks perform a territorial aerial display that lasts up to five minutes