BACK FROM THE BRINK

SPECIES INFORMATION GUIDE

Field Woundwort

Stachys arvensis

Field Woundwort is a member of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*) and has the square-ish stems and opposite paired leaves characteristic of this family. It can grow up to 25 cm tall and has oval-heart-shaped leaves; the lower leaves have short stalks and upper leaves are stalkless. Stems, stalks and leaves are all hairy.

Flowers are up to 7 mm long and pink-purple with white and deeper purple markings. They are asymmetrical with a large lower lip and three other smaller lobes. Its flowers are arranged in groups of up to six in the leaf axils. Like with other *Stachys* species, Field Woundwort has an unpleasant smell when bruised.

Lifecycle

Field Woundwort is an annual plant. Seeds germinate in the spring and it flowers between April and November. Seeds are thought to be long-lived.

Habitat

Field Woundwort is found in arable fields, allotments and gardens, waste ground and road verges in low-land areas. It prefers sandy and clay loams and does not like chalky soil. It occurs on limestone outcrops in Western Ireland. Field Woundwort is intolerant of dense shade. It is often associated with uncommon cornfield flowers such as Corn Spurrey.

GB status and rarity

Due to its widespread decline, Field Woundwort is classified as “Near Threatened” in The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (2005) and is also considered “Near Threatened” in the Vascular Plant Red List for England (2014) and “Vulnerable” in the Vascular Plant Red List for Wales (2008).

Protection under the law

This plant is not protected under law in any of the UK countries.

Survey method

For smaller populations individual plants can be counted whereas for larger populations their size should be estimated.

Distribution

Field Woundwort is found across England, especially in the south, and Wales. Records of this species diminish in number as you travel north. It is not common Scotland except around the industrial belts and in Ireland it is common only in the south.

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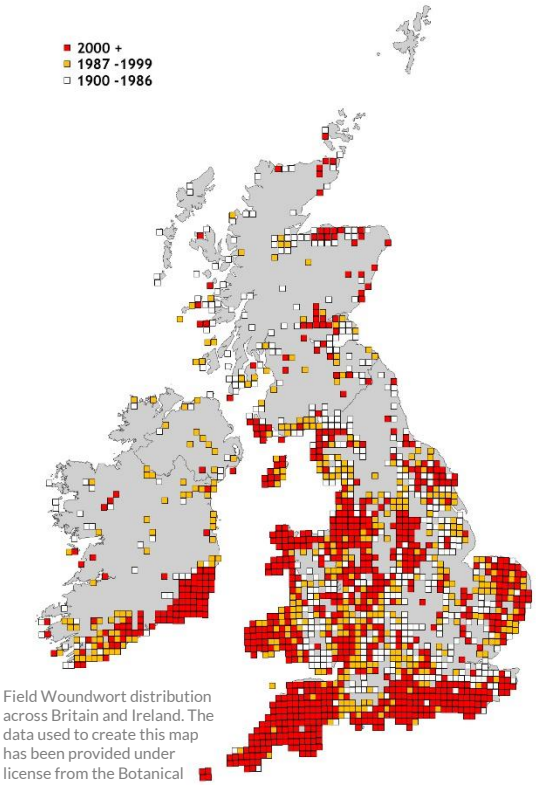

Field Woundwort distribution across Britain and Ireland. The data used to create this map has been provided under license from the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and accessed from the Society's online database.

Habitat management

Conserving the diversity of arable flowering plants is important for pollinators such as bees and butterflies and for healthy ecosystems. Field Woundwort, being a member of the mint family, is visited by bumblebees and butterflies. It prefers annual disturbance and the creation of bare ground during the spring and so habitat management for this species should focus on annual spring cultivation. Historic management practices and records for the site should be examined. If Field Woundwort has been present historically, regular spring cultivation may be sufficient to enable dormant seeds to germinate.

Broad-spectrum herbicides and nitrogen fertiliser use should be avoided. If treatment of a problematic weed species is required, targeted herbicide use should be employed once Field Woundwort has set seed.

Field margins can provide ideal habitat since they are less likely to have herbicide and fertiliser applications. Rotational management of margins should be used to prevent the build-up of pernicious weeds. Field Woundwort can be found within a sparse arable crop, such as cereal that has been sparsely drilled or one that does not tiller.

Reasons for decline

Field Woundwort has declined due to the increased fertiliser and herbicide use in intensive arable farming. The majority of its seed germinate in the spring rather than in the autumn, therefore the widespread change from spring to autumn cultivation of arable fields has also contributed to the decline of Field Woundwort and many other cornfield flowers. Minimum tillage and direct drilling of crop seeds does not disturb the soil sufficiently to stimulate germination of Field Woundwort seeds.

Field Woundwort and Common Blue butterflies © Cath Shellswell