

# Wild Candytuft

## *Iberis amara*



### Lifecycle

Wild Candytuft is an annual plant, flowering from May to September. It germinates in autumn and produces long-lived seed.

### Habitat

A species of bare, open ground on chalk, found in bare patches of grassland, rabbit scrapes, quarries and sometimes in cultivated arable field margins.

### GB status and rarity

Vulnerable.

### Protection under the law

This plant is included as a species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity under Section 41 (England) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

### Survey method

Best surveyed at the end of July into August, when the plant is at the end of its flowering stage and is beginning to fruit. In small populations of fewer than 100 plants, individual plants can be easy to distinguish and should be counted. Larger populations can be difficult to count and as such a sampling strategy should be used. This species can

Wild Candytuft is a flowering, annual plant which can grow up to 40 cm in height. Its flowers measure between 6-8 mm across and are either white or pale violet. Each flower has four petals, the two outer petals being noticeably longer than the two inner petals. The flowers occur in flat-topped heads, which elongate in fruit. The fruits, 3-6 mm, are almost round, winged and have a deep notch. Leaves are narrowed to the base, glossy with teeth present towards the leaf tip. The leaves are largely hairless except that often white hairs are present along the leaf edge. Leaves occur alternately upon a weakly angled solid stem which tends to be hairy, at least below.

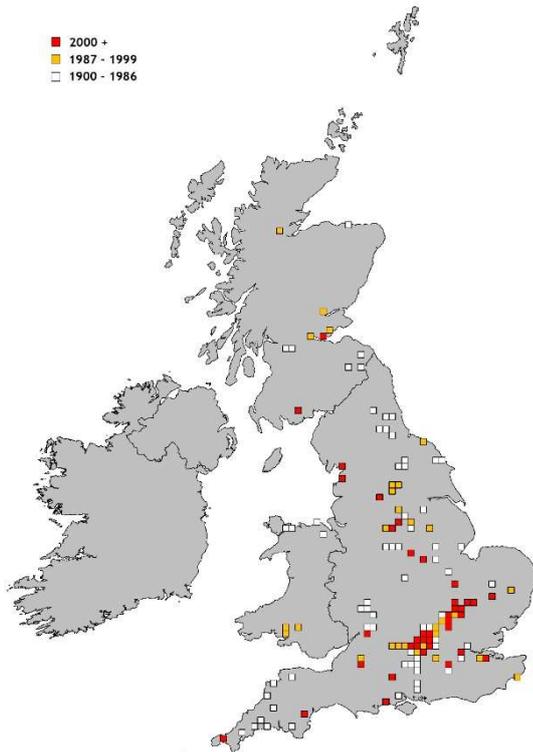
Wild Candytuft can be confused with two similar garden species Garden Candytuft and Perennial Candytuft. Garden Candytuft leaves tend to be entire with no teeth and hairless (including the margin of the leaf). In addition, the stems also tend to be hairless. Perennial Candytuft is a larger plant (to 60 cm) which has thick fleshy leaves that snap audibly!

be confused with other white flowered members of the cabbage family, but the shape of the fruit is a good identification characteristic.



**Distribution**

A native of South and West Europe and North Africa. Distribution in Great Britain is mainly centred in South Central England, restricted mainly to the Chilterns from Reading to Cambridgeshire. There are also outlying sites in Wiltshire and Surrey.



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

**Reasons for decline**

In recent years intensive arable farming has resulted in a decline in this species at arable sites. Managing arable margins as grassland margins has also had a negative impact. Another reason for its decline in grassland situations is the reduction of the rabbit population which can provide the disturbance and bare ground required by this species.

**Habitat management**

Cultivation or ground disturbance should be carried out from October to November. Wild Candytuft seed is thought to be extremely long-lived, therefore there is strong potential to restore lost populations through sensitive management.

Ideal management on arable land involves autumn cultivation from ploughing, without subsequent disturbance until next autumn. Harvest of crops should be after the plants have produced seed.

In non-arable situations, disturbances to open ground should be restored and maintained annually in Autumn.



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