

Cornfield Flowers Project



Species Cards



Cornfield knotgrass (*Polygonum rurivagum*)

Least Concern

Very rare in our area; only found in arable fields

The common Knotgrass is a very similar species, but is much more widespread and appears in a variety of habitats, also including arable

REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Nitrogen application; herbicides;
shift to autumn cultivations

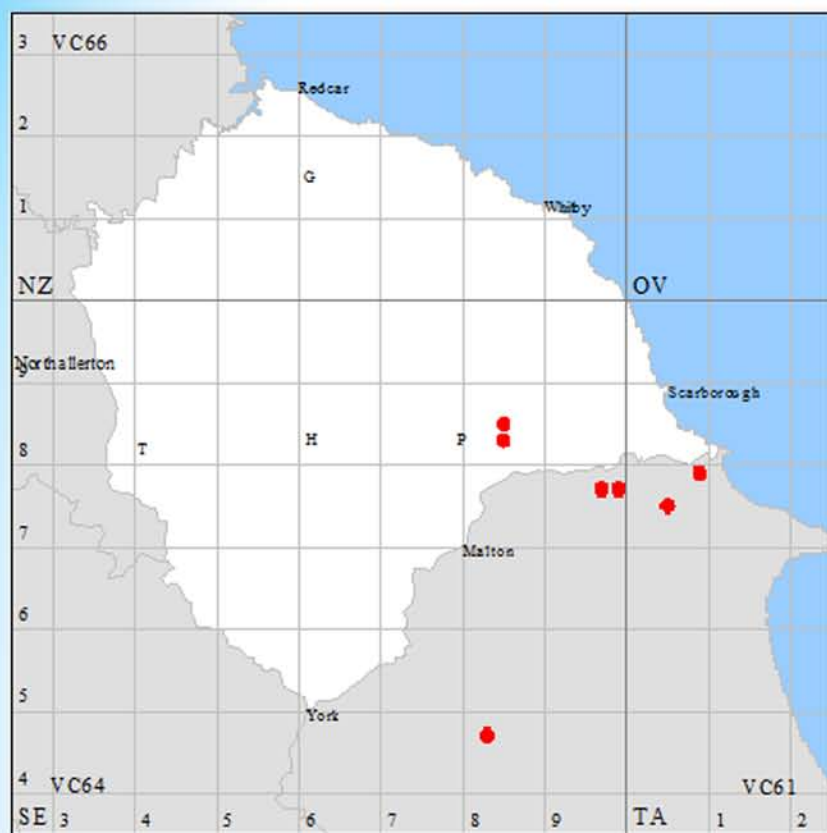
Our Cornfield knotgrass experience...

Cornfield knotgrass was one of those plants we had tip-toed around for several years. Nan Sykes does not mention it at all in *Wild Plants and their Habitats in the North York Moors*, while Eva Crackles dismissed it as 'introduced' in *Flora of the East Riding of Yorkshire*. In *Arable Plants – a field guide*, Phil Wilson describes it as local, with most of its distribution in South-east England but with outliers to the north of us, even into Scotland – not impossible for it to feature in our area then.

Discussing it with local botanist Cedric Gillings, we decided we would familiarise ourselves with its growth-habit and soil preference. Not long after, we were surveying Philip Winter's West End Farm at Muston, and noticed some knotgrass plants that were more erect and with more pointed leaves than others. Cedric went to the trouble of sending material away to the appropriate referee, who confirmed it was *Polygonum rurivagum*. What all of us wanted were seeds, because the defining feature of Cornfield knotgrass is that it has much larger seeds than the other knotgrass species. However, our specimens would not be persuaded to part with any and the field had been harvested so no more were available.

In 2008 Chris Wilson was surveying a cornfield just north of Thornton-le-Dale when he found a great number of upright knotweed plants with narrow leaves. Once again they would not be persuaded to part with any seeds, so he therefore collected several plants and put them in a paper bag. Two weeks later the contents were emptied out, and about half the seeds that dropped were much larger than the others. It was subsequently confirmed that this was the first report of Cornfield knotgrass in North Yorkshire.

Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Cornfield knotgrass (*Polygonum rurivagum*)



Key

● Post-2000 records
(inc. CFP introductions)

■ Pre-2000 records

G: Guisborough T: Thirsk

H: Helmsley P: Pickering

Data: BSBI, 2014 Maps produced by MapMate®

Key Facts - Cornfield knotgrass (*Polygonum rurivagum*)

- Preference for light, calcareous-based soils
- Spring germinating
- Strongholds in East Anglia and southern England - rare in our area
- Its similarity to the much more common Knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) means it is easily overlooked

UK Conservation Designations

The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (2006) designates all UK wildflowers by their rarity, and hence conservation importance, in the following order:

Extinct → Extinct in the wild → Critically Endangered → Endangered
Vulnerable → Near Threatened → Least Concern

The Cornfield Flowers Project is spearheaded by the Carstairs Countryside Trust, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire Moors Association and North York Moors National Park Authority. It has a demonstration field and nursery at Ryedale Folk Museum and a working arable field at Silpho, near Scarborough. It is supported by the North York Moors National Park Sustainable Development Fund, North York Moors Coast & Hills LEADER Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

