

Cornfield Flowers Project



Species Cards



Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)

Least Concern / Endangered

The official designation for Cornflower is 'Least Concern', based on all records of its occurrence. However it is believed our native plant actually accounts for only a third of these - the rest introduced from seed mixes or garden stock - making its true rarity status much more severe.

Only 105 naturally occurring sites in the UK in 2005.

REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Improved seed-cleaning methods; herbicides

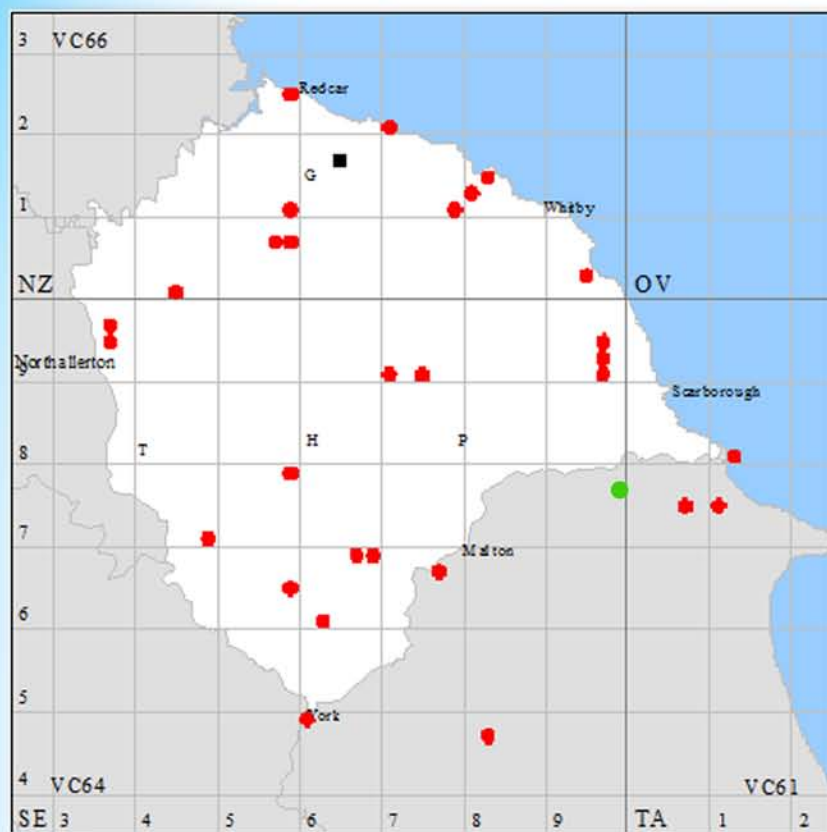
Our Cornflower experience...

In Phil Wilson's book, *Arable Plants: A Field Guide*, Cornflower is listed as Nationally Rare. Nan Sykes in *Wild Plants and their Habitats in the North York Moors* lists it as extinct in our area in the early 1990s, and the last record by Scarborough Field Naturalists Society was in 1916.

It would seem to have a stronghold in Holderness near Hull, where Eva Crackles lists several sites in the *Flora of the East Riding of Yorkshire*, the last in quantity at Bursea in 1981. It also grew in later years prolifically near North Cave, from where Martin Phillips of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group obtained a large quantity of seed which he passed on to the Cornfield Flowers Project. At about the same time, 2003, it was found growing in good numbers at Glebe Farm, Potter Brompton by our volunteer farmer John Middlewood. At that time we were growing Cornflower in our demonstration cornfield at the Ryedale Folk Museum and it had a nasty habit of coming up white and purple as well as blue - the seed having come from an unknown source, probably someone's garden.

Once we acquired the seed from North Cave and Potter Brompton we destroyed all the plants at the Museum and replanted with our local provenance. There are now over 30 sites for Cornflower recorded lately for our area, about half of which are directly attributed to the CFP; the others are often the result of 'wildflower mixes' sold by seeds-men to farmers and gardeners.

Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)



Key

● Post-2000 records
(inc. CFP introductions)

■ Pre-2000 records

● Original known site

G: Guisborough T: Thirsk

H: Helmsley P: Pickering

Data: BSBI, 2014 Maps produced by MapMate®

Key Facts - Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)

- Formally a common site in arable fields, referred to in much folklore
- Most readily found on sandy soils but adaptable to other conditions
- Prefers autumn germination but will still produce small plants in spring
- Very popular plant with bees and other pollinating insects

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.

