

Cornfield Flowers Project



Species Cards



Field madder (*Sherardia arvensis*)

Least Concern

A low-growing, mat-forming annual with small, pale-pink four-petalled flowers

Found in over 40% of CFP surveys, but not often in large quantities

REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Herbicides; competitive crop varieties

Our Field madder experience...

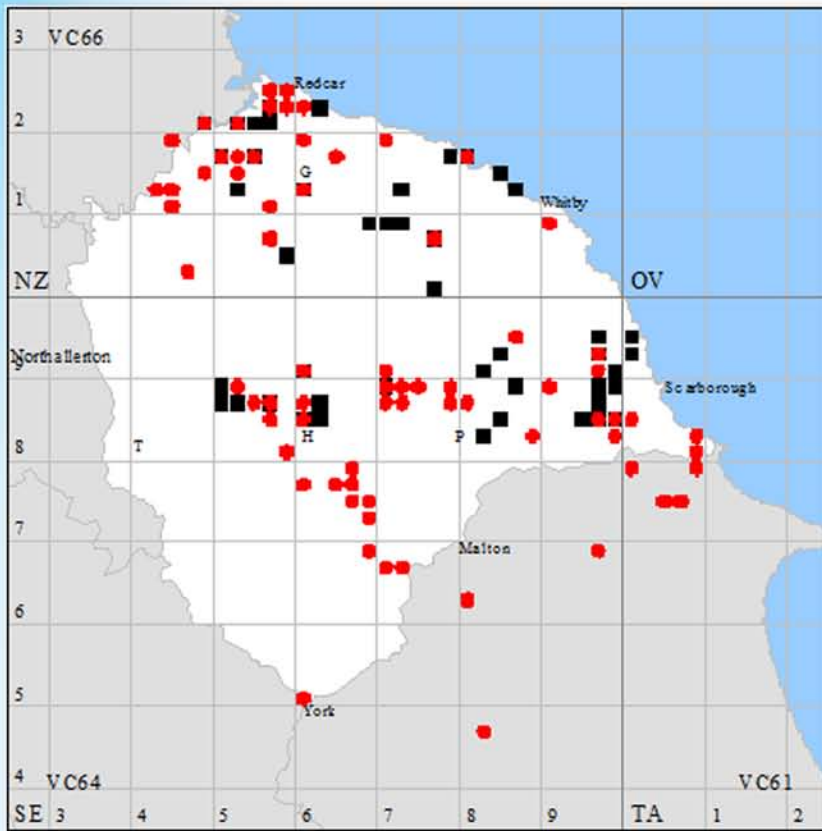
Field madder is an unassuming low-growing plant, but its tiny pink flowers are worthy of close-inspection as they have a rather simple elegance about them. A member of the bedstraw family, it is related to Lady's bedstraw and displays the same 4-petalled flowers.

Sherardia arvensis will grow in dry grasslands, sand dunes, waysides and verges, but its presence in arable habitats has declined markedly since the 1950s as a result of agricultural intensification.

We reliably record it at Silpho Field, Mushroom Field and South Fordon Farm – at this last site it tends to grow to quite a sizeable, sprawling plant.

A question we are often asked is whether this is the source plant of the ancient dye Rose Madder - it is not. That would be another member of the bedstraw family Madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) a native of Asia that doesn't feature in the UK flora.

Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Field madder (*Sherardia arvensis*)



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 - Field madder (*Sherardia arvensis*)

- Preference for well-drained, predominantly calcareous soils
- Autumn and spring germinating
- A member of the Bedstraw family (which includes Lady’s bedstraw, Crosswort and Cleavers)
- Low growth, with leaves in whorls along square-section stem and four-petalled pale-pink flowers are diagnostic

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:



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.

