



We are a specialist plant nursery based in Mid Wales. We cultivate some of the rarest and most threatened native British plants for habitat restoration schemes, species recovery projects and scientific research.

We also hold an important collection of rare British plants in cultivation. Many of these species are obscure and are not represented in botanical gardens or other botanical collections. More information on the species we hold in cultivation can be found on our website. www.rarebritishplants.com

Some of our recent and ongoing species recovery projects are summarised below.

Beacons Hawkweed

Saving the world's rarest plant

Beacons Hawkweed *Hieracium breconicola* is one of the rarest plants on the planet. The total world population currently comprises a single lonely plant. This last remaining plant maintains a tenuous foothold on a windswept mountain ledge in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Fortunately, Kew Gardens had seeds in storage at the Millennium Seedbank and this has allowed us to take up the challenge of saving Beacons Hawkweed from extinction. Following consultation with Kew, seeds were taken out of cold storage and sent to our nursery. We successfully germinated the seeds and our first batch of cultivated plants will be returned to the wild in spring 2022. It is hoped that by restocking areas that are beyond the reach of hungry sheep a new self-sustaining population will become established on inaccessible cliff ledges.



Hepste Hawkweed

An endemic Hawkweed on the cusp of extinction

Hepste Hawkweed *Hieracium apheles* is endemic to the Hepste Glen in the Brecon Beacons. Until recently it was presumed to be extinct as it hadn't been seen since 1896. Hawkweed experts from the National Museum of Wales undertook a targeted search of the Hepste Glen in 2010. To their delight they found one small population of Hepste Hawkweed growing close to where it had last been seen one hundred and fourteen years previously. A total of five plants were found, all in close proximity growing on a rocky ledge next to a small waterfall. Any chance event could eliminate such a tiny and critically endangered population and so conservation action was urgently required. In consultation with the site owners, we collected seeds from the wild plants and grew them on in our plant nursery. Sixty of these cultivated plants were returned to the Hepste Glen in summer 2021. Initial results are promising and most of the introduced plants have survived their first few months in the wild.



Rock Cinquefoil & Sticky Catchfly

Criggon Quarry, Breidden Hill, Montgomeryshire

Breidden Hill is a famous site for very rare plants including Rock Cinquefoil *Potentilla rupestris* and Sticky Catchfly *Silene viscaria*. At Breidden Hill both of these species are critically endangered and now persist in single figures. The decline of these species is a result of overzealous Victorian plant collectors, historical quarrying activities and invasive species. As part of the quarry restoration plan, we were commissioned to collect seeds of these two nationally rare plants and grow them on as part of a species recovery project. The project is currently ongoing but initial indications are that the new populations we have founded have successfully established.



Perennial Knawel & Upright Clover

Stanner Rocks National Nature Reserve, Radnorshire

Stanner Rocks is another famous site for rare plants. These include the Perennial Knawel *Scleranthus perennis* ssp *perennis* that is found nowhere else in the British Isles and Upright Clover *Trifolium strictum* that is only found elsewhere on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall. At Stanner Rocks both these species are restricted to a tiny spur of rock but were probably more widespread before quarrying activities in the nineteenth century. Perennial Knawel numbers fluctuate with approximately fifty plants each year but some years this can be reduced to single figures. Upright Clover is critically endangered with just one or two plants appearing each year and occasionally none at all. We were commissioned under licence by Natural Resources Wales to collect seeds and cuttings from the wild plants and grow them on to produce large numbers of seeds for translocation to a different part of the reserve. We planted out Perennial Knawel seeds ten years ago. The new population has gradually increased in size and now supports over one thousand plants. The Upright Clover seeds were planted out seven years ago. The new population now supports between fifty and one hundred plants each year and represents a very significant percentage of the entire British population.



Wood Bitter-vetch

Gilfach Nature Reserve, Radnorshire

This nationally scarce plant of unimproved hay meadows and rocky banks is restricted to the western half of Britain. We were commissioned to grow on seeds of Wood Bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* for a species recovery project at the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's flagship reserve Gilfach. At Gilfach, Wood Bitter-vetch is restricted to an old railway cutting and rock ledges along the River Marteg. However, it would once have been a component of the nearby unimproved hay meadows but was lost from these areas through inappropriate management prior to the Trust taking ownership. Wood Bitter-vetch has poor powers of seed dispersal and this has prevented re-colonisation of the hay meadows despite over twenty-five years of favourable management. Following consultation with the Trust's scientific committee and Natural Resources Wales it was decided to give the Wood Bitter-vetch a helping hand. We collected seeds from the existing population and grew them on for two years. The plants were returned to the wild in spring 2021. They flourished in their first few months in the wild and we are anticipating an even better show of flowers next year.



The Powys Rare Plants Project

Restoring rare plant populations in Mid Wales

With funding from the Welsh Government and in collaboration with the three Mid Wales Wildlife Trusts, we have just commenced work on an ambitious species recovery project. The project is targeting a dozen species that have declined in Powys or have been lost altogether. This project will include the establishment of new populations of Maiden Pink *Dianthus deltoides*, Globeflower *Trollius europaeus* and Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* and the resurrection of extinct species including Heath Cudweed *Omalotheca sylvatica*, Spreading Bellflower *Campanula patula* and Annual Knawel *Scleranthus annuus*.



For more information and to get in touch: www.rarebritishplants.com