

Common Grasses, Rushes & Sedges

A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife

Grasses and their relatives, the rushes and sedges, are often over-looked as they are wind pollinated so lack colourful flowers to attract insects. Yet grasses are the dominant plants around us and play a vital role in the ecosystem, providing food and shelter for so many animals. If you pause to look more closely, grasses are fascinating and beautifully adapted to thrive in their habitats. These 10 species are all common and not difficult to identify.

When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.



Cock's-foot – *Dactylis glomerata*

ID: To 1m. Lumpy flowers with 1-2 stiff side branches. Forms tussocks of rough grey-green leaves and flattened basal stems.

Where: Verges, rough grassland.

Similar: None.



Reedmace – *Typha latifolia*

ID: Familiar 'bulrush' with dark brown seed heads which become fluffy as the seeds mature. Strap-shaped leaves 8-20mm wide.

Where: Ponds, canals, marshes.

Similar: [Lesser Bulrush](#) (leaves narrower 6-12mm).



Meadow Foxtail – *Alopecurus pratensis*

ID: To 1m. Single flower spike per stem with green/purplish tints. Flowers early.

Where: Verges, rough grassland, meadows. Apr-June.

Similar: [Timothy](#) ('horned' spikelets + flowers later).



Timothy – *Phleum pratense*

ID: To 1m. Single flower spike per stem. Often longer than Meadow Foxtail. Spikelets 'horned' (as shown).

Where: Verges, meadows. June-Aug.

Similar: [Meadow Foxtail](#) (spikelets not 'horned').

Become a citizen scientist! If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at www.naturespot.org.uk and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page.

Other Leicestershire grasses, sedges and rushes to check out:

[Soft Rush](#), [Quaking Grass](#), [Tufted Hair-grass](#), [Lesser Bulrush](#), [Rough Meadow-grass](#), [Crested Dog's-tail](#)



Wall Barley – *Hordeum murinum*

ID: To 60cm. A common coloniser of road and pavement edges. Has long spines (awns). June-July.

Where: Roadsides, waste ground.

Similar: Meadow Barley (shorter awns).



Yorkshire Fog – *Holcus lanatus*

ID: To 60cm. Patch forming. Fluffy, pinkish flowers turning cream. Hairy and soft to touch. May-July.

Where: Verges, all types of grassland.

Similar: Creeping Soft-grass (only hairy at leaf nodes)



False Oat-grass – *Arrhenatherum elatius*

ID: To 1.5m. Flower head loosely spreading. Spikelets with small awns. June-July.

Where: Perhaps the commonest grass on verges and in meadows, particular if nutrient-rich.

Similar: None.



Annual Meadow-grass – *Poa annua*

ID: Small – to 30cm. Branched, spreading flowerhead. Only 2 branches on lowest whorl.

Where: Road and pavement edges. Can turn up anywhere!

Similar: Other Meadow-grasses are larger.



Pendulous Sedge – *Carex pendula*

ID: Large tussocks to 1.5m. Leaves have 'w' profile. Several drooping flowers per stem.

Where: Woodland. Shady, damp places. Has become increasingly common.

Similar: No other sedges are as large.



Hard Rush – *Juncus inflexus*

ID: 60cm-1m. Dense tussock of grey-green stems which are solid and ridged. Flowers from the stem.

Where: Very common on damp, boggy grassland.

Similar: Soft Rush (greener with squishy, smooth stems).

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