

Where and what do we record?

For many years we have not been consistent in the way we record plants in man-made habitats or that have been planted in the countryside. Before the 1990s alien plants were very inconsistently recorded, especially those that had been planted. Nowadays most recorders record aliens, but with wide divergences when near to habitations. Some people record up to x distance away, some up to the wall or fence, some on it, and one or two even as far over as they can reach! There are even wider variations in attitudes to shrubs and trees deemed to have been planted. We are not recording consistently what is out there in the countryside.

But the British and Irish flora is a dynamic and changing flora, and the compass of our recording must reflect that. We would like to set out guidelines (please note that these are guidelines, not a diktat) for best practice. We should attempt to record:

- **The countryside.** Everything up to boundary of gardens [this would include parks and estates (public or private), and cemeteries, though the boundaries will often be obscure]. This should include anything planted outside these, including street trees. It should include what is growing on the outward side of the wall or boundary, if it is obviously an escape (e.g. *Cymbalaria*, *Campanula portenschlagiana*).
- **Parks and gardens including public or private estates, cemeteries and the like.** Anything growing wild and naturalised inside their boundaries. Status is the key here, especially for interesting or uncommon taxa. However, for taxa such as *Bellis*, *Taraxacum* etc., the default (i.e. native) would suffice. Planted trees in estates etc. are as worth recording as street trees.
- **Cultivated crops (annual or perennial), allotments, game cover and wildlife strips.** These should be treated as gardens, i.e. ignored other than the weeds of the planted/seeded area, but crop volunteers (escapes/relicts) should be recorded as should contaminants (e.g. *Orobanche* in bean crops). One could argue that when recording weeds in them, the crop species really should also be recorded, but we leave this up to the discretion of the recorder.
- **Woods, plantations, shelterbelts and hedgerows.** These should be recorded in the normal way, with the appropriate status attached. We appreciate that for many trees and shrubs, such as oaks, beech and hawthorn, this is often impossible to judge and the default status might (as well) apply.

This guidance is all about recording a changing landscape in a consistent manner and is intimately linked to recording statuses. Therefore, record street trees, forestry plantings, game crops, etc., but simply attach status to the record wherever possible.

There are always going to be grey areas, but if you start off with the premise that you should try and record everything, including what is planted, up to the garden boundary, then at least we will be more consistent than now.

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April 2015