

LORDS & LADIES

Lords-and-ladies have large, arrow-shaped leaves, and leaf-like flower heads that curl around a long inner spike carrying tiny, yellow flowers. This spike eventually produces an upright stalk of bright red berries

Where is it found? It is a shade-loving plant of woodlands and hedgerows.

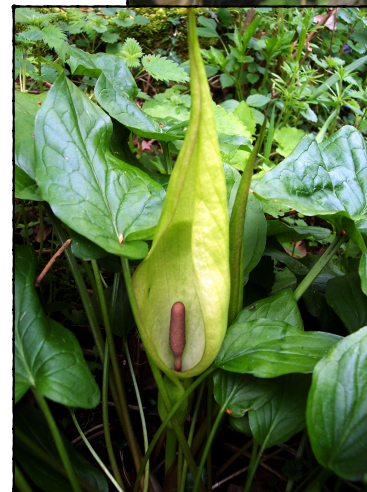
Poisonous: Very common and while not strictly poisonous they contain needle shaped oxalate crystals which are very sharp and penetrate the skin. The crystals can irritate the skin, mouth, tongue, and throat, resulting in throat swelling, breathing difficulties, burning pain, and stomach upset.

The orange berries are quite attractive but their acrid taste and the tingling in the mouth (which begins quite quickly) mean that large amounts are rarely ingested and serious harm is unusual

It is a plant with a great many common names, possibly as many as one hundred, which can lead to great confusion over the plant ID

- cuckoopint, lords and ladies, wake-robin bod gabhair, Adam and Eve, tender ear, Jack-in-the-pulpit.

These plants are beautiful and a vital part of the ecosystem - many are a food source for insects. So enjoy looking at them but take care and don't touch them.



Easily confused by children with dock leaves and plantain. Dock leaves are usually much larger, slightly hairy and not waxy
Plain

FOXGLOVES

Foxgloves are tall plants with bell-shaped flowers are usually bright purple but can sometimes be white, cream yellow, pink, or rose and generally bloom in the spring

Leaves are ovoid in shape, hairy with a toothed margin. The first year plant produces a basal rosette but older plants show an alternate leaf arrangement on the stem.

Flowers are pink-purple in colour, occasionally white, and showing darker coloured spots on the lower lip of the flower. Flowers are tube-shaped and grow on a tall spike. The plant itself can grow up to 2m tall.

Fruit is a capsule encompassing many seeds, which changes colour from green to black when ripening

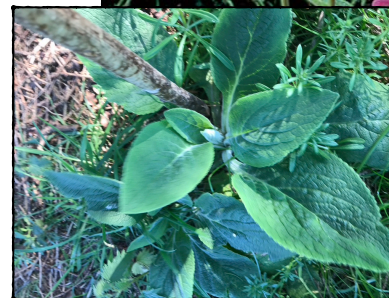
Where are they found? Roadside verges, woodland edges, heaths, gardens and along hedgerows. Plants grow well in areas where soil is acidic and can be found across the UK

Poisonous: Foxglove plants contain toxic cardiac glycosides. Ingestion of any parts of the plant can result in severe poisoning.

Symptoms include nausea, headache, skin irritation and diarrhoea. In severe cases it can lead to visual and perceptual disturbances and heart and kidney problems.

Value to Wildlife: Foxgloves are adapted to be pollinated by bees, especially long-tongued bees such as the common carder bee. The plant's brightly coloured flowers and dark spotted lip attracts the bees, and the lower lip of the flower means that the insect is able to land before climbing up the tube. During this process the bee will dislodge pollen and then transfer it to another plant..

Did you know... The mottled markings on foxglove flowers were once thought to be the hand-prints of fairies!



Leaves are widely misidentified for comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*. Comfrey leaves can however be distinguished as they are untoothed so have smoother leaf edges.



DEADLY OR BITTERSWEET NIGHTSHADE

Deadly nightshade has purple-green, bell-shaped flowers and untoothed, oval leaves. The berries are green and they ripen to black.

Where is it found? You'll find it mainly in the southern half of the UK in woodland, along paths and in scrubby areas

Poisonous: All parts of the plant are toxic, but the berries are especially poisonous. They contain a mixture of tropane alkaloids that affect the nervous system. Atropine, in particular, causes severe symptoms in humans, including sweating, vomiting, breathing difficulties, confusion, hallucinations and potential coma and death.

Bittersweet nightshade is a vine-like plant that is found throughout the United States, Canada, and parts of Europe and Asia.

It is in the same family as tomatoes and potatoes. The STEM is used to make medicine.
The LEAVES and BERRIES are poisonous

The flowers of bittersweet however have noticeable yellow anthers and they are suspended from purple stems. The berries of this plant are red in colour as opposed to the black berries of deadly nightshade but they are also poisonous.

These plants are beautiful and a vital part of the ecosystem
- many are a food source for birds & insects.
So enjoy looking at them but take care and don't touch them.



DOG'S MERCURY

Dog's Mercury, is a common woodland species - it has spear-shaped, toothed, hairy and coarse textured fresh green leaves carried on upright stems (20-40cm tall)

It produces a foul and rotten smell, and bears clusters of small, greenish flowers from February to April, but leaves can persist throughout the year.

The unopened male flowers look like small green pyramids in strings, the opened flowers are pale green/cream with the stamens sticking out from between three triangle 'leaves'.

The female flowers are double spheres with tiny 'petals' sticking from the top.

Where is it found? Woodlands, where it spreads by underground stems, covering large swaths, often appearing with other woodland species, such as violets and bluebells, but it does have a habit of shutting out many other flowers once it's taken hold, becoming a dominant species.

Finding large swathes of Dog's Mercury is quite a good indication that the woodland is well established.

Poisonous: At first glance, this perennial plant appears innocuous, but this couldn't be further from the truth. There are few reported cases of human poisoning, but symptoms would include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, lip and throat swelling. Poisoning to animals is more common than humans, especially among cattle, sheep pigs, goats, horses, dogs and rabbits. Occasionally the poisoning is fatal.

Confusion:

This plant is quite distinctive, the main problem with confusion is the accidental picking of the leaves of Dog's Mercury hidden among wild garlic or other prolific woodland plants

The most recent report of mistaken identification came from a couple of foragers who mistook it for brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*). Following cooking it for their supper, the two suffered with nausea, vomiting and abdominal pains within 3 hours. The couple were hospitalised and both fully recovered within 48 hours



FEMALE FLOWERS



EARLY GROWTH



MALE FLOWERS

POISON HEMLOCK

Hemlock is a tall green plant (up to 2m tall) with purple spots on its stem and leaves similar to the carrot plant, it has white flowers (n.b young plants may not have purple spots yet)

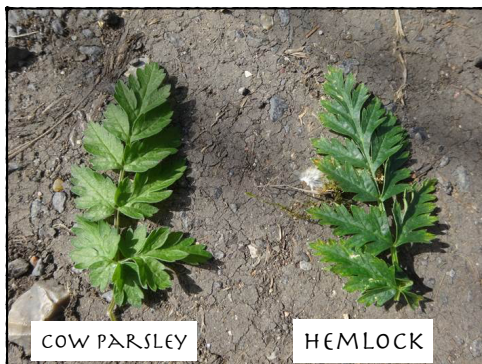
The leaves are bit fern like with two to four pinnate divisions, the whole looking triangular in shape. The flowers are a collection of tiny white flowers with 5 petals which grow in an umbel in Spring to early Summer.

The stem is smooth, hairless, grooved, green and usually covered in purple/red spots and streaks and can reach up to eight feet tall

Poisonous: Hemlock is acutely toxic to people and animals and symptoms can appear twenty minutes to three hours after ingestion. If it is eaten hemlock causes sickness and in severe cases it can kill by paralysing the lungs.

All parts of the plant are poisonous and even the dead canes remain toxic for up to three years. It doesn't just have to be eaten to poison people, it has been reported that touching the plant for lengths of time, when pulling up large stands of Hemlock without gloves, has allowed the toxin to penetrate through the skin and make the person involved very ill.

Being a member of the same family as carrot and fennel, there have been instances of its being mistaken for an edible plant though its mouse-like smell is, generally, a deterrent to ingestion.



COW PARSLEY

HEMLOCK



COW PARSLEY

HEMLOCK

Often confused with Cow Parsley (Chervil)

Differences :

Leaves: They are subtly different shades of green - the hemlock is a little darker. Cow parsley has a matt finish whilst the hemlock has a slightly glossy sheen. Hemlock has finer leaves, more feathery in appearance.

Stems: Cow parsley stems have a groove, a bit like celery, hemlock doesn't. Branches off from the main stem - Cow parsley is triangular whilst hemlock is round and hollow. Whilst cow parsley often has a pinkish hue to the stem, hemlock has very distinctive purple blotches on a green stem. Make sure that you check the stem at ground level, this seems to be where the blotchiness often occurs.

Feel: Cow parsley is slightly hairy, hemlock has smooth stems.

Advice in case of accidental poisoning in people

- If you think a child or adult has eaten part of a suspect plant, seek medical advice immediately from a hospital accident & emergency department.
- Take a sample of the plant with you (as many parts of the plant as you can for accurate identification e.g. leaves, flowers, fruits, stem).
- Do not panic and do not try to make the person sick.

