

View from The Southwood Garden September 2019

It's amazing what you see when you look ...



Put your nose to the ground and see what's hidden in the grass?

In the second week of September I hand-weeded the turf, and instead of discarding what I removed, decided to identify it. I found at least a dozen non-grass plants hidden amongst the green blades. Self-seeders such as these have survived with no assistance so they can be a helpful guide to understanding the conditions of your site and what might grow there.

The book I have drawn on to help me identify and understand the weeds I found is Madeline Harley's *'Wonderful Weeds'* - a must for any self-respecting gardener or environmentalist. Botanist and Head of Pollen Research at Kew, Harley clearly explains the biology, ecology and wildlife value of weeds as well as their medicinal and cultural heritage.

I unpicked a metre length of this stem (photo above) which was working its way across the grass. Like strawberries, this plant sends out runners which produce roots where a node or growth point touches the ground. I struggled to identify it. Was it a wild strawberry? No, the flowers were yellow, not white. Was it creeping cinquefoil? No, the leaves were not as narrow. It is (I think) the ornamental Indian or Barren strawberry (Duchesnea indica). Why? Because of the speed of its spread and its unpalatable fruit. It is found from Japan to India and has naturalised in Jamaica and East and in N. America. I will remove the plant from the grass because of its potential to quickly overwhelm smaller plants. For more info, see Plants for Our Future
<https://pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Duchesnea+indica>



Lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*)

Although I only found a small patch of this in the grass, it has the potential to spread. It has bright shiny yellow flowers which appear in late spring, are attractive to bumble bees, honey bees, small beetles and flies. It is very effective at spreading via its small tubers which break off when you lift the plant. In John Wesley's *'Primitive Physick'* (1747) – a self-help guide for the poor, the Methodist preacher suggests Celandine can be used as a cure for jaundice.



Liverwort and moss

These plants have neither flowers nor roots, the latter explaining why they can grow on compacted or soil with poor drainage. With no roots they do not compete with other plants for nutrients and water although they may inhibit seed germination by cutting out light. I didn't think the conditions were damp enough for these plants but the area where these were found is a shady spot where the water drains to. Moss also provides shelter and food for invertebrates.



Sticky Mouse Ear (*Cerastium glomoeratum*)

The most prevalent weed in the grass this year because it flowers even when regularly mown and it flowers early so is able to reproduce several times during the season. If you catch it before it flowers it can be dug in for green manure. In the past, the plant was used to relieve headaches and stop nose bleeds.



Lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*)

Without flowers, it was difficult to decide whether this was Lesser trefoil or Black medick but what clinched it was the dent at the top of each leaflet - thank you to Naturespot <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/lesser-trefoil> for pointing this out. Lesser trefoil is regarded as the most likely plant to be the shamrock used by St Patrick to represent the Holy Trinity.



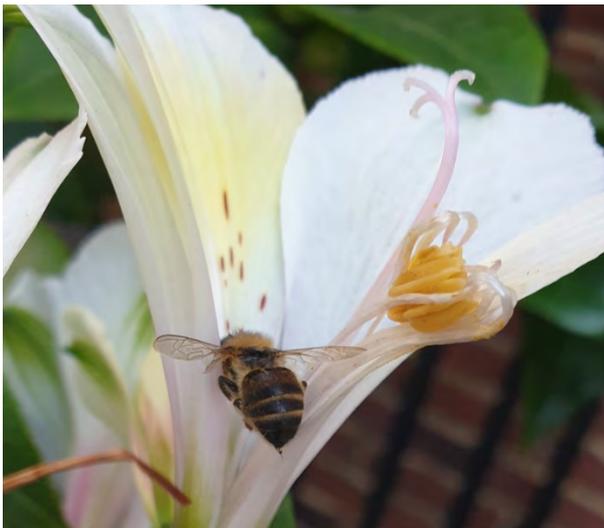
Greater plantain (*Plantago major*)

Greater plantain has an amazing 90% success rate of seed germination. This percentage rises to 100% if birds have eaten the seed and then excreted it! But this specimen has been regularly mown so hasn't had a chance to produce seeds. Greater plantain can be a sign of compacted soil. Fascinatingly Greater plantain is one of the most valuable medicinal herbs.



Flat leaf parsley (*Petroselinum crispum var. neapolitanum*)

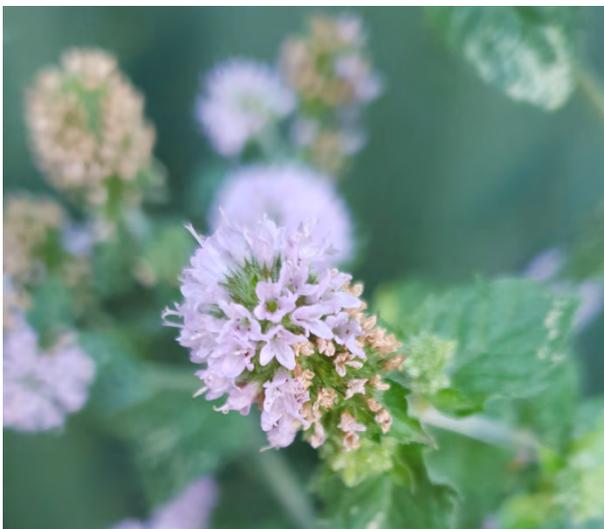
I found two seedlings of Flat leaf parsley growing happily in two different places. I realised what the plant was when I rubbed its leaves and enjoyed its fresh, fruity scent. Smell is an important identifier when trying to work out what a plant is or what family it is from. Did parsley seeds fall from someone's lunch?



This looks like a mining bee visiting a Peruvian lily.



A sawfly characteristically eating a rose leaf on the Rosa 'Graham Thomas' starting from its edge to the midrib.



We let some of the mint flower at the end of the season to provide a late source of nectar.

Plants in flower during September 2019	
Alstroemeria 'Summer Sky', A. 'Summer Snow'	Peruvian lily
Anemone x hybrida 'September Charm'	Japanese anemone
Anagallis moneii 'Sky Lover'	Blue pimpernel
Aster divaricatus	Wood aster
Calibrachoa 'Superbells Red'	
Cyclamen hederifolium	
Duchesnea indica	Indian strawberry
Erigeron karvinkianus	Mexican fleabane
Geranium nodosum	
Lavendula angustifolia 'Hidcote'	Lavender
Liriope muscari	
Lythrum salicaria	Purple loosestrife
Nandina domestica	Heavenly bamboo
Rosa 'Graham Thomas'	Rose
Salvia microphylla 'Lutea Cerise Form'	