

WILD things
bringing biodiversity alive in business



Bath Asparagus Biodiversity Action Plan

A Wildthings Species Action Plan
2006–2010

Action Plan

Introduction

Bath Asparagus, or Spiked Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum pyrenacium*) is a nationally scarce plant found in its greatest numbers around the Bath area. It is a tall elegant plant of shady roadside verges, open woodlands and hedgerows. It is related to the blue bell having long strap like leaves that emerge in the spring, but it has greenish-white star-shaped flowers on tall flowers spikes, that can reach 1m high. It is found throughout Europe but has a very limited distribution in Britain. Its ecology is not well understood but one theory explains its local distribution as a result of the Roman occupation, with the plant being introduced either unintentionally or as a cultivated food crop.

Whatever its origins, it is a particular feature of the Bath and North East Somerset area, contributing to the region's botanical diversity and local interest. During the 1990s Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) ran a successful project promoting significant public interest and awareness of the plant, and this action plan builds on the findings and recommendations of that project.

Images of the flower have been used to develop the logo of Wildthings.





Current status and distribution

A Bath Asparagus Project ran during the mid 1990's. During this time AWT undertook surveys of roadside verges and woodlands and also encouraged the public to record and monitor the occurrence of Bath Asparagus. The local distribution of Bath Asparagus at the end of the last millennium is therefore quite well understood. Eighty-one Bath Asparagus sites were identified and the surveys identified main concentrations around Keynsham, in particular around Queen Charlton, and around the south of Bath. The distribution recorded is illustrated in the map below. The Bath and North East Somerset area is considered of importance for this plant in a national context.

The plant is slow to colonise, and so local populations and distributions can be badly affected by the effects of habitat loss and poor habitat management, and there is anecdotal evidence that local populations and distributions are in decline.

Current factors affecting the species in Bath and North East Somerset

- Habitat loss and neglect
- Inappropriate management, particularly from roadside verge cutting regimes
- Picking of un-opened flower stalks for human consumption
- Development and recreational pressures
- Over grazing of woodlands by deer

Current action in Bath and North East Somerset

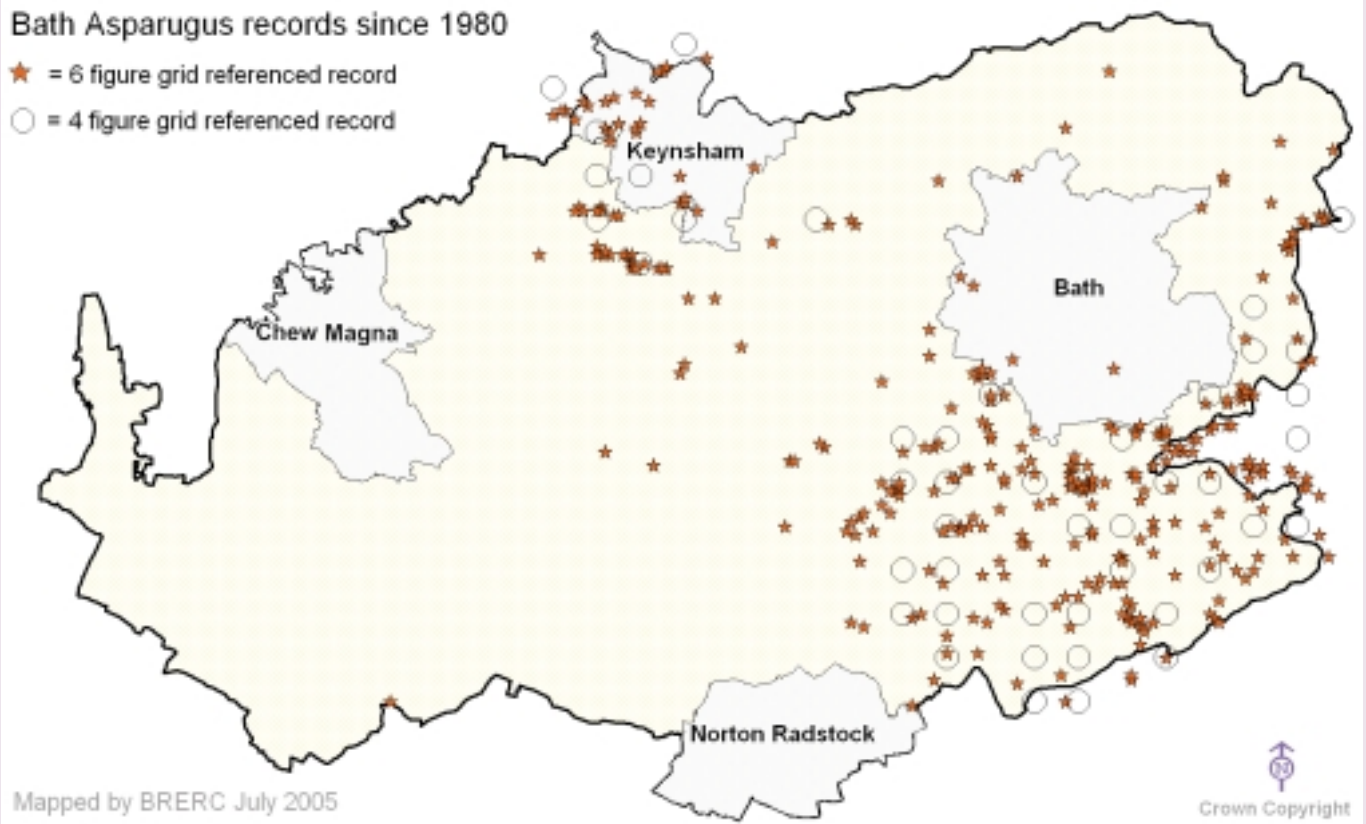
- Biodiversity Action Grants – available to help positive management
- Roadside Nature Reserve Initiative designed to protect key verges
- Local Plan Policy to protect species of importance to Bath and North East Somerset
- Use of the Bath Asparagus imagery within the Wildthings logo
- Awareness raising initiative by AWT (positive legacy)



Distribution map

Bath Asparagus records since 1980

- ★ = 6 figure grid referenced record
- = 4 figure grid referenced record



Action plan objectives and targets

- 1 Clarify the distribution and size of existing populations within Bath and North East Somerset
- 2 Sustain and bring into favourable conservation management key Bath Asparagus sites
- 3 Provide advice and guidance on good habitat management
- 4 Promote interest in and awareness of Bath Asparagus



Proposed actions with lead agencies

Action	Lead	Measurable Outputs	Objectives	Target Date
A. Review distribution data & produce agreed map	BRERC CVWG	Agreed distribution	1	2006
B. Survey sites to verify current distribution	AWT / CVWG (funding dependent)	Up to date survey information	1	2006/2007
C. Provide advice to landowners & managers	AWT FWAG	No. farm visits; improved management	2,3	Ongoing
D. Designate key verges as Protected verges	B&NES	Protected sites	2,3,4	2006 onwards
E. Provide guidance note on the management of Bath Asparagus sites	Wildthings	Guidance	2,3,4	2007
F. Promote Wildthings logo	Wildthings	Greater awareness of plant and biodiversity issues	4	Ongoing
G. Publish list of associated species / habitats	Wildthings	Publication, greater awareness of plant and biodiversity issues	4	2006
H. Ensure adequate policies for species protection within the Local Development Framework	B&NES	Policies adopted	2	Review 2008
I. Ensure implementation and monitoring of planning policies	B&NES	Records of Bath Asparagus sites affected and mitigation achieved	2	2007 onwards

AWT – Avon Wildlife Trust

B&NES – Bath & North East Somerset Council

BRERC – Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre

CVWG – Cam Valley Wildlife Group

FWAG – Farming Wildlife Advisory Group

Wildthings – Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership for the B&NES area