

Bird's-foot Trefoil

Lotus corniculatus

Plants · In flower May–Sep



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A low, sprawling perennial of short grassland with small trefoil leaves and clusters of yellow pea flowers, often streaked and flushed with orange-red in bud — the eggs-and-bacon of its country name. The seed pods radiate from a point like the toes of a bird's foot. It is common on verges, dunes, unimproved grassland and thin soils around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

This is one of the most important wildlife plants in British grassland: it is the foodplant of the common blue butterfly and of the six-spot burnet moth, and a major nectar source for bumblebees. Like other legumes it fixes nitrogen through root nodules. The foliage contains small amounts of cyanide compounds, which deter some grazers.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Peas (Fabaceae)
HEIGHT	10–40 cm, sprawling
STATUS	Native; common, and a key butterfly foodplant

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