

Cuckooflower

Cardamine pratensis

Plants · In flower Apr-Jun



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A slender perennial of damp grassland with pinnate leaves and loose spikes of four-petalled flowers in pale lilac-pink or nearly white. Cuckooflower grows in damp meadows, marshy pasture, ditch sides and wet verges around Dumfries, often in drifts, and its flowering coincides with the return of the cuckoo — hence both the name and the timing.

BEHAVIOUR

It is the principal foodplant of the orange-tip butterfly, whose eggs are laid singly on the flower stalks, and is also used by the green-veined white. Cuckooflower can reproduce vegetatively as well as by seed: small plantlets form on the leaves, root where they touch damp ground and grow into new plants. It has declined with the drainage of wet meadows.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Cabbages (Brassicaceae)
HEIGHT	15-60 cm
STATUS	Native; declining with the loss of wet meadow

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