

Ramsons (Wild Garlic)

Allium ursinum

Plants · In flower Apr-Jun



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A woodland perennial forming dense carpets of broad, bright green, elliptical leaves topped by rounded heads of white star-shaped flowers. The whole plant smells strongly of garlic. Ramsons favours damp, shaded, base-rich ground — river banks, wet woodland, shady lanes — and forms extensive sheets in suitable woods around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

Like the bluebell it exploits the window before the canopy closes, growing fast, flowering and setting seed by early summer. The garlic smell comes from sulphur compounds released when the leaves are crushed, which deter grazing. It is a popular foraged plant, but the leaves can be confused with the seriously poisonous lords-and-ladies and lily-of-the-valley — smell is the test.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Asparagus family (Amaryllidaceae)
HEIGHT	20–45 cm
STATUS	Native; common in damp, shaded woodland

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