

Spotter guide

Hay meadow flowers and grasses



Wood crane's-bill

Are you a plant spotter?

As you explore and discover our stunning upland hay meadows in the North Pennines – why not challenge yourself to see how many flowers and grasses you can spot?

A four-point scale gives you an idea of how easy or hard it'll be to find each plant.

Easy
25 points



Fairly easy
50 points



Difficult
75 points



Very difficult
100 points



Common hay meadow plants

Common sorrel



Flowering time:

May–June

Arrow-shaped leaves with lobes at the base that point backwards. Upper leaves clasp stem.

Size: 30–100 cm

Spotted / /

Pignut



Flowering time:
May–July

Stem hairless and hollow. Upper leaves threadlike. Flowers white.

Size: 20–30 cm

Spotted / /

Meadow buttercup



Flowering time:
May–June

Lobed leaves with lobes not stalked. Flower stalks not furrowed.

Size: 30–100 cm

Spotted / /

Selfheal



Flowering time:
June–November

Downy. Leaves pointed oval. Lower leaves stalked. Flower heads square. Flowers blue/violet.

Size: 10–25 cm

Spotted / /

Ribwort plantain



Flowering time:
April–October

Long, spear-shaped leaves with conspicuous veins. Flower stalk furrowed.

Size: 10–40 cm

Spotted / /

Red clover



Flowering time:
May–October

Hairy. White crescent on leaves. Egg-shaped flower heads. Flowers deep pink.

Size: 10–30 cm

Spotted / /

Less common hay meadow plants

Marsh marigold



Flowering time:
March–June

Stout and hairless. Stem hollow. Large kidney-shaped, dark green glossy leaves. Leaves paler on underside. Flowers yellow.

Size: 15–40 cm

Spotted / /

Meadowsweet



Flowering time:
June–September

Hairless. Long-stalked leaves, dark green above and white, softly furry below. Flowers in dense clusters, creamy coloured and sweet-scented. Damp places.

Size: 50–150 cm

Spotted / /

Meadow vetchling



Flowering time:
May–August

Clambering. Parallel veins on leaves. Tendrils. Yellow flowers. Black seedpods.

Size: 30–100 cm

Spotted / /

Rough hawkbit



Flowering time:
June–September

Shaggily hairy. Not branched. End of leaf rounded. Flower heads solitary and droop before flowering. Seeds form a 'clock'.

Size: 10–40 cm

Spotted / /

Common knapweed



Flowering time:
July–September

Stout stem. Spear-shaped leaves. Scales below flower blackish-brown. Deep pink, brush-like flowers.

Size: 20–80 cm

Spotted / /

Yellow-rattle



Flowering time:
May–July

Leaves in opposite pairs and not stalked. Flowers yellow. Seed case inflated with seeds rattling inside when ripe.

Size: 15–40 cm

Spotted / /

Special plants of dry meadows

Lady's-mantles



Flowering time:
May–July
Roundish, lobed leaves.
Tiny green/yellow flowers
in loose clusters.

Size: 10–30 cm

Spotted / /

Great burnet



Flowering time:
June–September
Hairless. Leaves stalked
and blue/green below.
Flowers deep red in dense,
oblong head.

Size: 30–100 cm

Spotted / /

Meadow saxifrage



Flowering time:
April–June
Hairy stem. Shallowly-
lobed, kidney-shaped
leaves, mainly at the base
of the plant. Leaves shrivel
before flowering time.
White flowers in loose
clusters.

Size: 10–40 cm

Spotted / /

Wood anemone



Flowering time:
March–May
Hairless. Stem leaves
long-stalked and in whorl
of three. Flowers white
and solitary.

Size: 10–25 cm

Spotted / /

Melancholy thistle



Flowering time:
June–July
Almost spineless. Spear-
shaped leaves green above
and thickly white-felted
below. Large, deep pink
brush-like flower heads.

Size: 50–100 cm

Spotted / /

Wood crane's-bill



Flowering time:
June–August
Hairy. Leaves deeply lobed.
Reddish/mauve flowers in
pairs. Seed head ends in long,
straight, pointed beak, hence
name 'crane's-bill'

Size: 20–60 cm

Spotted / /

Special plants of damp meadows

Devil's-bit scabious



Flowering time:
June–October

Hairy. Elliptical leaves often blotched purplish. Flowers blue/purple in rounded heads.

Size: 20–80 cm

Spotted / /

Water avens



Flowering time:
May–September

Downy. Main leaves at base of the plant. Nodding, bell-shaped flowers, dull pink/dark red. Seed head with hairy hooks.

Size: 20–60 cm

Spotted / /

Ragged-robin



Flowering time:
May–July

Stem rough. Narrow leaves. Bright pink flowers with 'ragged' appearance.

Size: 30–80 cm

Spotted / /

Sneezewort



Flowering time:
July–September

Hairy. Dark green, shiny, long narrow leaves with tiny teeth. White flowers with creamy centres.

Size: 20–60 cm

Spotted / /

Globeflower



Flowering time:
May–July

Hairless. Deeply cut lobed leaves. Large, ball-like yellow flowers.

Size: 10–60 cm

Spotted / /

Marsh valerian



Flowering time:
May–July

Leaves at base of plant oval and stalked. Stem leaves unstalked. Pale pink flowers in rounded clusters.

Size: 10–30 cm

Spotted / /

Hay meadow grasses

Sweet vernal-grass



Flowering time:
April–July

One of the earliest grasses to flower. When dried has characteristic smell of fresh hay. Leaves flat. Spike-like flower heads with bent bristles.

Size: Up to 50 cm

Spotted / /

Cock's foot



Flowering time:
Late-April–November

Stout. Stems flattened. Leaves often rough. Dense, purplish flower heads.

Size: Up to 100 cm

Spotted / /

Rough meadow-grass



Flowering time:
May–July

Leaves pale green, flat and soft. Loose, pyramidal flower head.

Size: Up to 90 cm

Spotted / /

Meadow fescue



Flowering time:
June–July

Dark green, flat leaves. Large, loose flower head.

Size: Up to 80 cm

Spotted / /

Common bent



Flowering time:
June–August

Delicate, spreading purple-brown flower head.

Size: Up to 70 cm

Spotted / /

Crested dog's-tail



Flowering time:
June–August

Narrow, glossy leaves. Flower head is a compact, one-sided spike.

Size: Up to 60 cm

Spotted / /

How did you do?

After your visit add up your score to find out how you have done:

If you scored between 300 and 700 – You've done really well and seen a lot!

If you scored between 700 and 1,200 – Fabulous, good job – you're well on the way to becoming an expert!

If you scored over 1,200 – Amazing! You've really delved deep and got to grips with these really special habitats!

Hay meadows

North Pennines hay meadows are a rare and important habitat with 40% of the UK's remaining upland meadows found in the AONB. Hay meadows are dependent on traditional management and are an important element of the cultural landscape of the North Pennines.

Top: Hawkbit and great burnet, Weardale © NPAP/Rebecca Barrett

Middle: Wood crane's-bill, red clover, pignut, yellow rattle and buttercup, Allendale © NPAP/Rebecca Barrett

Bottom: Please respect the hay crop © NPAP/Rebecca Barrett



Bursting with life

Even though a hay meadow may look like just another green field, a closer look will reveal lots of different plant species. The richness of flowering plants means an abundant supply of nectar which attracts bees and other invertebrates to the meadows. These in turn attract insect-eating birds like swallows and house martins. Even at night the meadows supply important insect food for bats.

Feast for the senses

A walk through a flowering hay meadow is a rich experience for our senses. Delicate and differently shaped flowers bloom in many colours and on a warm day the scent of some can be intoxicating.

Please walk in single file along any footpaths and take care not to crush or trample the growing hay.

Hay crop

The hay made in our meadows is an important source of winter food for the cattle and sheep kept in the North Pennines. Many farmers regard their hay as their highest quality fodder and believe that their animals are healthier when they are fed on it.

NORTH PENNINES

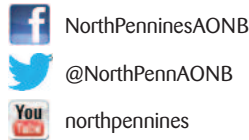
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



The North Pennines is one of England's most special places – a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. In recognition of this it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is also a Global Geopark – an accolade endorsed by UNESCO.

This handy spotter guide will be invaluable to you as you explore the stunning hay meadows found across the North Pennines. Identify the many plants and grasses in these amazing habitats, add up your score and see how well you've done!

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The AONB Partnership has a Green Tourism award for its corporate office

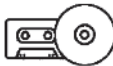
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