



## #6: The Plant Hunt – Summer Special

To keep you busy through the summer we've put together an extra-long Plant Hunt List. Happy Plant Hunting!



### Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion/Epilobium angustifolium*)

Rosebay Willowherb is an enthusiastic plant; spreading to form dense colonies in areas of disturbed ground. In WWII it carpeted the rubble left from German aid raid attacks earning itself the nickname “Bombweed”. Rosebay Willowherb grows tall spires (around 1.5m high) with lanceolate willow-like leaves spiralling up them. The spires are topped with tapering racemes of purple/pink flowers. The secret to their successful spreading is down to their seeds; each plant produces around 80,000 seeds which are attached to silky hairs which very easily catch the wind, rather like a parachute, enabling the seeds to travel long distances.



### Common Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)

Common Mallow is a widespread plant, creeping low in semi-managed grass or growing much higher (to around 1m) if it is allowed to. It has distinctively lobed leaves which show the dust in dry windless weather. Its flowers are beautiful, with five deep pink petals that are striped with much darker veins.



### Buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*)

Buddleias are enterprising shrubs, growing in the most unlikely locations; one even tried to root itself behind one of the metal discs on the Selfridges part of the Bullring! They were first introduced into the UK from China in the 1890s but have very much made themselves at home. They are a common sight in abandoned buildings and growing along train lines (their light seeds are thought to have been dispersed across the country by the slipstreams of passing trains). Buddleias flower prolifically throughout the summer and their pyramids of purple/lilac flowers are a popular source of nectar for butterflies and moths, hence they are sometimes known as “Butterfly Bushes”. Their leaves are long and tapering, growing opposite each other.



### Sow Thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*)

The species pictured here is Field Sow Thistle which is a tall perennial (reaching 1.2m). You might also see one of its smaller cousins, Smooth Sow Thistle or Prickly Sow Thistle. It has tall branching flower stems bearing yellow flower heads which are densely packed with thin petals, very much like a tall dandelion. The leaves grow alternately up the stems and are sessile (they grow directly out of the stem with no leaf stalk). The leaves have wavy, ragged margins with sharp spines.



### Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*)

Creeping Cinquefoil is a low growing plant that spreads out through grasses and hedgerows, dotting the ground with splashes of yellow from its flowers. It expands using reddish runners which stretch out and then grow roots where they meet the ground again. Its leaves have five distinct fingers and have serrated edges. Its flowers each have five heart shaped petals, looking very like miniature wild roses.



### Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)

The bane of many gardeners, Hedge Bindweed is a bully, clambering over and strangling other plants. It is also a nuisance to get rid of – it can grow back from the smallest fragment of its roots. However in hedgerows or when cloaking derelict structures it can look very ornamental. It has magnificent large white flowers that unfurl into trumpet shapes. Its leaves are also very elegant elongated hearts. It is a very good example of a weed being merely a plant in the wrong place.



### Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)

Field Bindweed is a smaller, more delicate looking cousin of Hedge Bindweed; but don't let appearances deceive you: Field Bindweed will still take over in an ornamental garden if not kept in check. Its leaves are shaped like arrowheads and its flowers are pink or white and often tinged with both colours.



### St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

St John's Wort is a sunny plant with bright yellow flowers with slightly ragged petals that are edged with dark dots. When the stems and flower buds are crushed they ooze with a blood red juice, which has been given both pagan and Christian symbolisms, linking it to Midsummer Day and the feast of St John the Baptist on 24<sup>th</sup> June. This common wild St John's Wort is a thin, often slightly scraggly perennial. It has small opposite green leaves that are speckled with tiny dots of glandular tissue. These become conspicuous when a leaf is held up to the light, giving the illusion that the leaf is perforated with lots of holes. You are also likely to see much bigger and bolder hybrids of St John's Worts which are the offspring of garden cultivars.



### Harebell / Bellflower (*Campanula rotundifolia*)

Harebells are a common sight on well drained, relatively undisturbed ground. These perennials grow delicate spires of blue/purple flowers (occasionally you may find

white or pink flowers too). The leaves growing from the base of the plant are round to heart shaped, where the leaves on the flowering stems are much thinner.



### Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*)

Tufted Vetch scrambles its way through other plants, using tendrils to hold itself to its neighbours. It sends its long climbing shoots out from a central tap root which can grow over 1m long under the ground. Its leaves are pinnate with 8-12 leaflets. Tufted Vetch flowers enthusiastically, sending out many cascading racemes of pea shaped flowers in shades of blue, purple and pink.



### Indian or Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Himalayan Balsam was introduced into the UK in 1839 but it didn't take long for it to become our most widespread balsam. It grows aggressively and now dominates many of our riverbanks. When the seed pods are ripe they explode – propelling their

seeds many metres away from the parent plant. While Himalayan Balsam is a nightmare plant for conservationists many people are very fond of its beautiful flowers which are hooded and resemble oriental orchids. It grows between 1 & 2m tall with upright reddish stems and lanceolate leaves.



### Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Yarrows are very common grassland plants, often turning up where they are not welcome in immaculate lawns! If allowed to grow they have feathery pinnate leaves with a soft artemisia like aroma when crushed. The flat flower heads contain many tiny ray and disc flowers which are usually white but occasionally pink.