

April Wildflower Ramble

April 2020

Dear Nightingales,

I hope you are not finding the lockdown too difficult!
I thought, as many of you will be having walks around Cheapside, you should take a look at some of the wild flowers that are growing. Because Royal Ascot will not be taking place the roadside verges might not be cut allowing the wild plants and the insects that depend on them to survive a bit longer than in other years!

Did any of you find out what the strange mark was on the holly leaf in the March Ramble was? It is made by a small fly called the Holly leaf miner that develops inside the leaf. The larvae eats through the green tissue and pops out to pupate in the leaf litter. You can find out about it here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holly_leaf_miner

The Wildflowers:



1: Green Alkanet - *Pentaglottis sempervirens*. There is lots of this species growing along the north side of Watersplash Lane.



2. Groundsel - *Senecio vulgaris*. This plant, common in disturbed habitats like roadsides is native to Europe, northern Asia, and parts of North Africa.



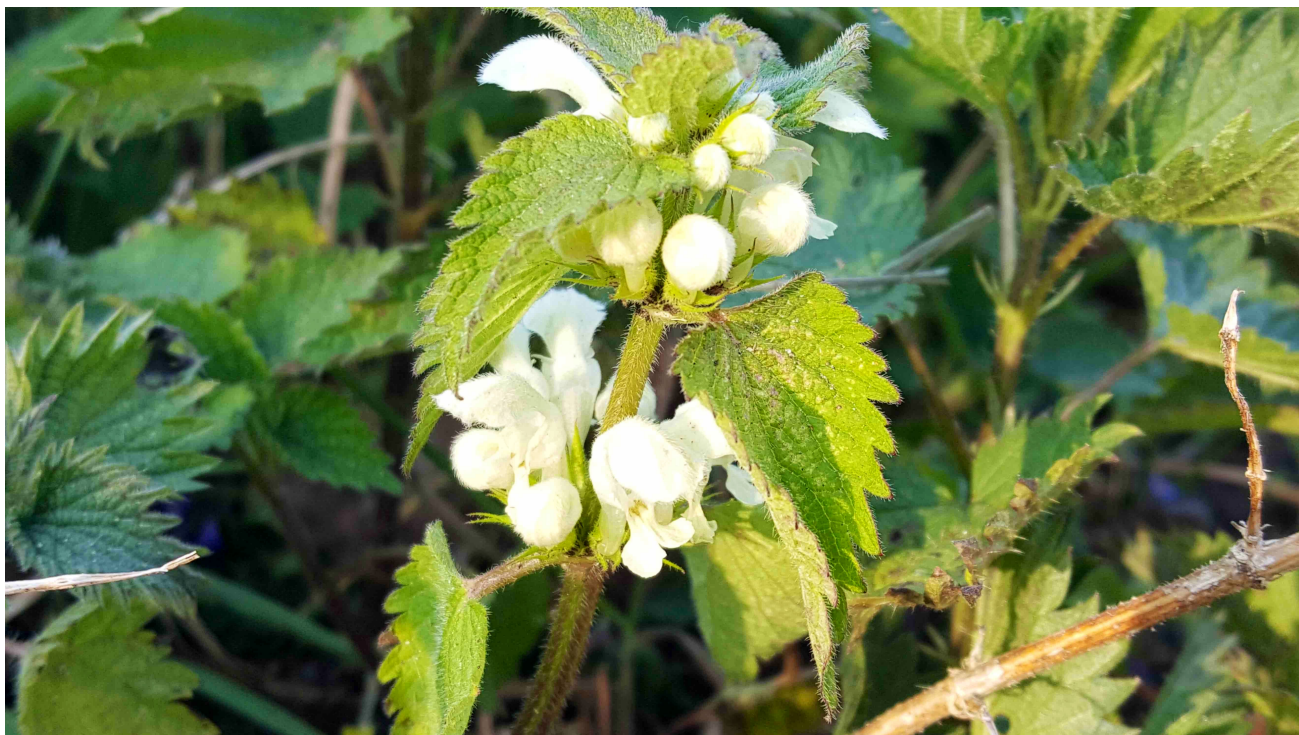
3. Common Primrose - *Primula vulgaris*. Also known as English Primrose, this species can cover the ground in open woods and shaded hedgerows.



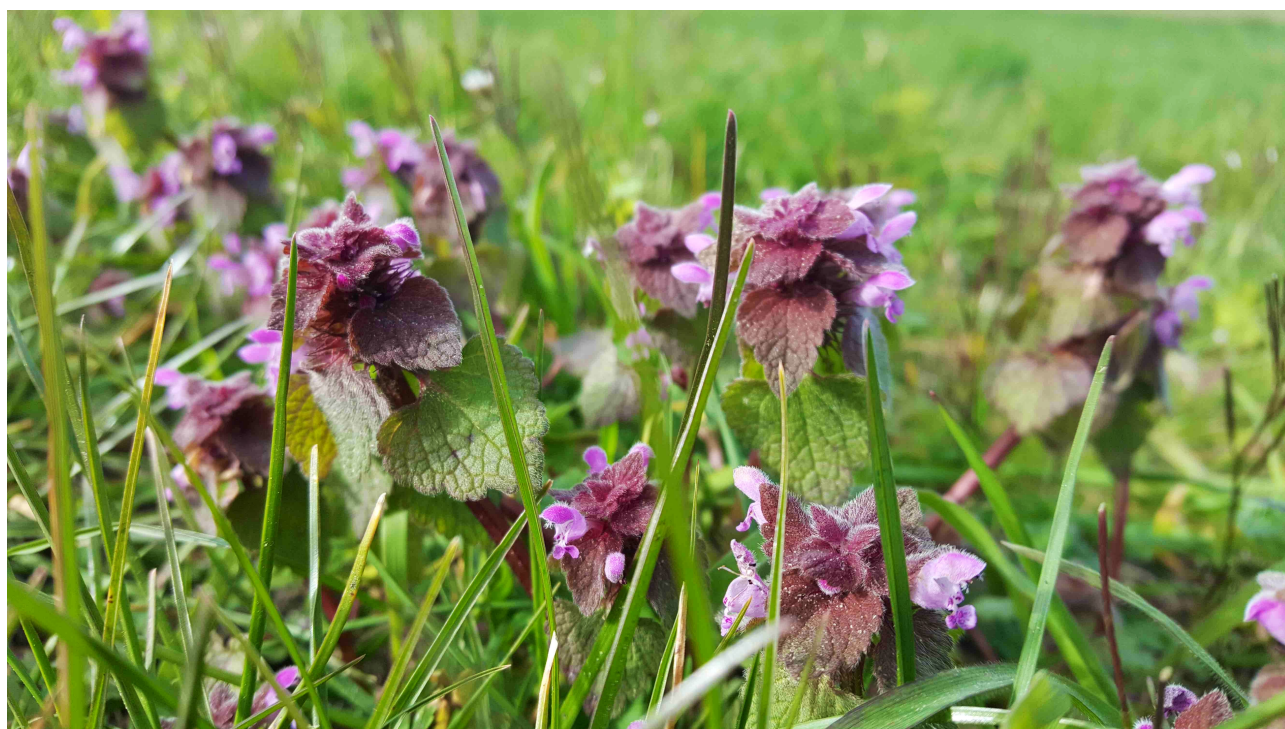
4. Greater Stitchwort - *Stellaria holostea*. The common name Stitchwort is a reference to a herbal remedy in which this plant was used to cure muscle stitch (which you can get if you run without stretching first).



5. This is the Common Dog Violet, *Viola riviniana* which is unscented. Another very similar species is called the Sweet Violet, *Viola odorata*, which is fragrant. Apart from the difference in smell, these two species are very difficult to tell apart.



6. White Dead-Nettle - *Lamium album*. White dead-nettle is a common plant of roadside verges, waste grounds and grassy banks - anywhere the ground has been disturbed. Like Yellow archangel, and other members of the dead-nettle family, it doesn't have stinging leaves.



7. Red Dead-Nettle - *Lamium purpureum*. Lots of different species of long-tongued insects visit the flowers of red dead-nettle, including the red mason bee and bumble bees.



9: Comfrey - this is a well know garden escape. It is a hybrid called *Symphytum* Hidcote Blue.



Blue Comfrey -
Symphytum caucasicum.



8. Herb Robert - *Geranium robertianum*.



10: Yellow Archangel - *Lamiaeum galeobdolon*. This one is another garden form (subspecies: *argentatum*), which has variegated leaves. One of the widely planted garden varieties of Yellow archangel has the nickname of 'aluminium archangel' because of the silver streaks in its leaves. This variety has escaped into the wild in many places.



Yellow Archangel It is native to Europe, and found through Europe and Western Asia.



One of the positive things that has come out of the Corona virus outbreak is that road side verges are no longer being mowed. Many ecologists think that verges are cut much too often and plants like dandelions are seen as weeds when they are an important nectar source for pollinators such as solitary bees.



Bracken

How many of these wildflowers can you find? Can you find any more species? If you do, photograph it or make a sketch and write down where and when you found it. Some naturalists keep a notebook with them to record their finds.

One plant that you will find all over the place is a fern called bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) - the young fronds are coming up now and will continue to grow all Summer.

Happy rambling!

Yours, George

