



Wild flowers of the Blean



Wood anemone.

Trees are the tallest and oldest plants, and the Blean is the largest ancient woodland in Kent. However, it is the smaller plants we would like to celebrate here, as we take a closer look at some of the typical woodland flowers seasonally found beside the paths, rides and amongst the trees. One of the great pleasures of walking through the Blean is seeing carpets of flowers in the spring. However wild flowers provide so much more, including information!

How old is the Blean?

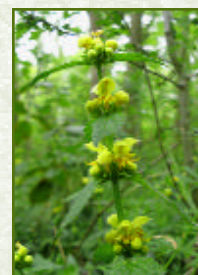
Bluebells, wood sorrel, wood anemone and yellow archangel rarely grow outside of ancient woodlands (woodland that has existed on a site since 1600 or before).

What lies underground?

Wild flowers tell us about site conditions, soils and the underlying geology. For example lesser celandines are found in wetter areas, and bluebells and primroses in the brighter coppiced areas. Acidic soils have produced the right conditions for heather and gorse to thrive in Church Woods.



Wood sorrel.



Yellow archangel.



Heather.

Who needs wild flowers?

Well apart from their beauty, native wildflowers are an important part of the incredibly rich biodiversity of the woods. They provide food and habitat for a wide range of insects and other creatures, including the nationally rare heath fritillary butterfly that feeds on the common cow-wheat growing on the wide rides and coppiced woodland of the Blean. Bats and birds feed on the insects, and the nightjar, a rare wonderful bird of southern heaths and open woodland glades, nests in between the clumps of heather in specially created and managed heathland areas.

Flowers we don't need!

Sadly not all flowers are a welcome sight. A number of vigorous non-native species have escaped gardens or mistakenly been introduced into woodland areas. In parts of the Blean plants such as rhododendron and Spanish bluebells threaten to overwhelm our native species and so reduce biodiversity.

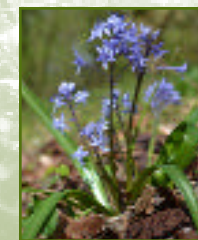
Please enjoy the flowers with your eyes, noses and cameras only! It is for all of the above reasons that it is a criminal offence to pick or dig up native wild flowers without express permission from the owners.



Common cow-wheat.
(Dave Rogers.)



Native bluebells.



Spanish bluebells.

the **Blean** is just minutes away...

Covering over 11 square miles, the Blean is one of the largest and most distinctive areas of ancient woodland in England, important nationally for both its wildlife and its history. The Blean has been a working woodland for over a thousand years, and continues to provide woodland products, including firewood and fencing materials, for local people. The splendour and tranquillity of this special landscape can be enjoyed on a network of paths and trails. This panel is part of a series of 18 located around the Blean. To see all 18 panels, visit www.theblean.co.uk. For information about walking in Kent visit www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent.

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