

# Dorset Flora Group

## Urban Flora Project

The built environment is a neglected habitat, but the diversity of plants in towns can be higher than in the farmed landscape. Whilst recording squares for the 2020 Atlas our experience is that the longest species lists often come from the squares with villages. The website 'More than weeds' (<https://morethanweeds.co.uk>) is dedicated to promoting interest in pavement weeds and a recent issue of the BSBI journal has a report on the urban flora of Cambridge (Preston, C. (2020) B&IB, vol 2, 1-26). I think it will be instructive look at the situation in Dorset. It is an activity easily accomplished alone and local to your home if you live in a town or large village; an ideal lockdown project.

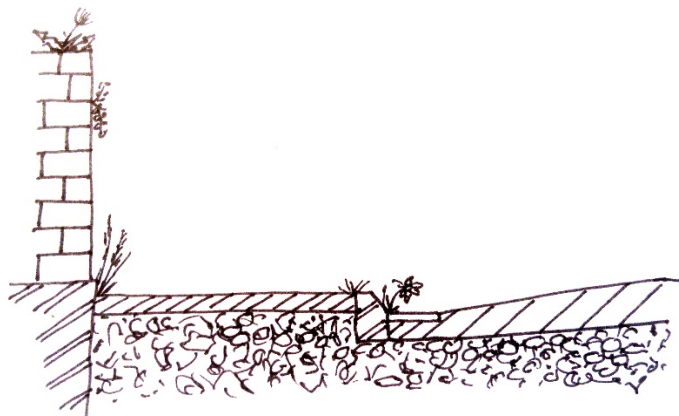
There are few sizeable towns in Dorset. It will be good to extend the project to the more urban villages, like my own village of Broadmayne. During the 2018 drought I identified 103 species in 14 roads and on the New Year Plant Hunt we found a species new to Dorset. The southern parts of the BCP conurbation are particularly rich in scarce species. Here is a working definition of the scope of the project and the methodology.

### Scope

- Urban areas are in settlements with a population over 500 and where the speed limit is 30mph or less, typically with street lights.
- A tarmac or paved footpath lined by buildings or houses with their gardens.
- Car parks and paved areas around seats and so on may be recorded.
- The trees may be recorded, but marked as planted. Many will be cultivars and difficult to name reliably.
- Don't record churchyards or parks, but narrow verges and around the base of street trees may be included.

### Methodology

- Record all species from the gutter, across the pavement and the wall (if present), including its top.
- Record individual roads, entering data into Living Record as a linear site with the name of the road.
- Different sides of the road could be recorded separately, but probably best to just record one side and include which in the site name using compass points: eg. 'High East St., S side'. Short roads, cul-de-sacs and alleyways are probably worth recording both sides.
- A note of the type of pavement and wall can be added, but is not essential.
- Two visits in the year, say spring and late summer, are likely to find the most species.
- Identification is a challenge because of atypical growth, often stunted and scrappy, and unfamiliar species.



This is not a dangerous activity, but there are risks to bear in mind. Be very careful on the road side when peering into the gutter or collecting a specimen. You will be far less visible to drivers and pedestrians when crouching down. Pavements are not clean places, so be sure to wash your hands, especially if you have collected specimens. The same applies when handling the material at home whilst identifying it.