



BRIDPORT COMMUNITY ORCHARD GROUP

Yellow rattle in the Bridport Community Orchard wildflower patch.

Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) as well as being an attractive new species in Bridport Community Orchard, is a parasitic plant of grasslands which takes some of its nutrients from the roots of neighbouring plants. It thereby does a great job of suppressing aggressive grasses and creating space for wild flowers. Wild flowers offer up their pollen and nectar to the Orchard insects and support the crucial diversity of this little patch of ground and the land beyond.

Yellow rattle takes its name from its fruit, more of a dry capsule which literally rattles when full of mature seeds. Another name is hay rattle as it generally goes to seed early before the hay is cut; (being an annual, this is essential). Traditional hay cutting and tedding then spreads the seed well. Bridport Community Orchard Group harvested yellow rattle seeds locally by hand and sowed them onto the short grass left after scything last summer. Rattle seeds like to sit through the winter and 'vernalise' in frosty conditions ready to spring up as little seedlings the following April. We are now leaving the plants to mature and set seed before scything our wild flower patch in late July or August.

Where it has grown well, the suppressing influence of yellow rattle on our bullish grasses in the Orchard is clear to see. We will harvest some of the yellow rattle seed before scything to spread in new areas of the Orchard and continue redressing the balance between grass and wild flowers.