

## Contacts

After completing the survey we hope your interest in wildflowers will grow. Below is a list of organisations which you can contact for further information on wildflowers.

### DEVON WILDLIFE TRUST

Shirehampton House, 35-37 St David's Hill,  
Exeter EX4 4DA

Tel: 01392 279244

Fax: 01392 433221

e-mail: [devonwt@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:devonwt@cix.compulink.co.uk)

website: [www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/devon](http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/devon)

### WEB SITE LINKS

BSBI - <http://homes.aol.com/bsbings/index.htm>

PLANTLIFE - [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)

FLORA LOCALE - [www.naturebureau.co.uk/papes/floraloc/floraloc.htm](http://www.naturebureau.co.uk/papes/floraloc/floraloc.htm)

Copies of this leaflet & survey form can be downloaded from: <http://go.to/offwell>

Your District Council may have a countryside or environmental service which might be able to support projects or offer advice.

This booklet was produced by East Devon District Council and Devon County Council with financial support from English Nature.

To find out more about the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan contact the County Ecologist at Devon County Council on (01392) 382257.

Email: [nature@devon-cc.gov.uk](mailto:nature@devon-cc.gov.uk)

Web Site for Biodiversity Action Plan - [www.devon-cc.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.devon-cc.gov.uk/biodiversity)



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL



EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# The Devon PRIMROSE Survey



## Your chance to help conserve wild primroses in Devon

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Over the last 50 years, many once common species have disappeared from our countryside. Conservation is not just about protecting rare or threatened species, so we need information on Primroses now, to ensure that they remain part of Devon's special countryside.

Why not take a little time out to fill in the survey form, while you enjoy a walk in the spring sunshine.

"Who could pass a primrose without a look of love," wrote John Clare. Devon is blessed with an abundance of Primroses. Eye-catching displays of pale yellow in hedgebanks and woods form part of the distinctive character of the County in spring.

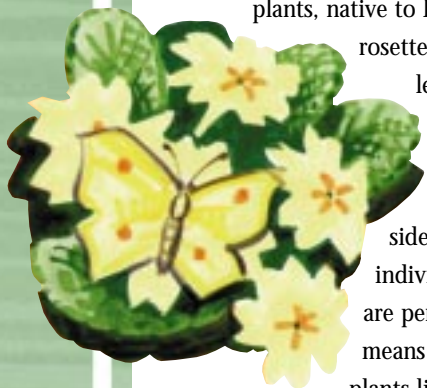
This booklet extends an invitation to everyone to help conserve wild Primroses in Devon. You can do this very simply, by participating in a county-wide community survey. Survey results will provide vital local information on current Primrose populations in Devon. From this information, any future changes can be identified and if necessary, acted upon.



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# Natural History of Primroses

Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) are small plants, native to Britain, with a rosette of oval, wrinkled leaves at ground level. They spread both by seed dispersal and by the sideways growth of individual plants. They are perennials, which means that individual plants live and flower for many years. Some Primrose plants may live for up to 25 years.



Primroses (*prima rosa* - the first rose) can be found flowering almost throughout the year, but the greatest profusion of flowers occurs in spring. The flowers provide a vital nectar resource at this time of year for early butterflies such as Brimstones.



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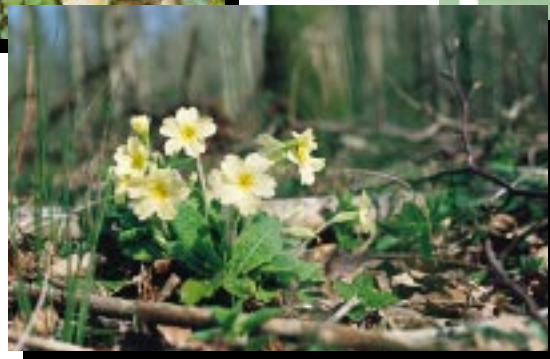
Primroses favour moist conditions, and in the east of the country, are usually confined to damp woods. But here in Devon, with our mild wet climate, you can expect to find Primroses almost everywhere - in fields,

on hedgebanks, verges, railway embankments, churchyards and woods.

Primroses are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. This makes it an offence to deliberately uproot a plant without the landowner's consent.



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## The Survey

This survey is very simple. It provides a means of recording and monitoring the numbers of Primroses throughout Devon and represents one of the most thorough surveys of its kind.

The best time to carry out your survey is in March or April, when most Primroses should be flowering. The survey is only concerned with monitoring native wild Primroses and not the various highly coloured cultivated varieties.

Your survey should be carried out where you find the nearest wild Primrose to your house or school (but not in someone's garden!) The distance to your nearest Primrose is an important measure which the survey will take into account. Even if this Primrose is the only one there, you should still complete the survey in this area. Knowing where there are only a few Primroses is as important as knowing where there are many.

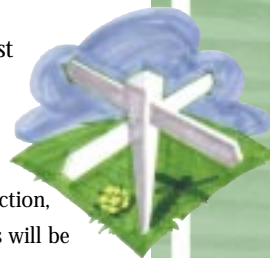
If you live in a town take this opportunity to stretch your legs and explore some of Devon's beautiful countryside. If you have time and would like to do a second survey, try to find a site with lots of Primroses.

Please remember to follow the Countryside Code at all times. Keep to Public Rights of Way and be aware of safety considerations. If you are on a road, please wear highly visible clothing.

## How to Survey

Once you have located your nearest Primrose plant:

- Find a permanent landmark near to the plant (e.g. a gate, road sign, junction, house, church or notable tree). This will be your starting point for the survey.
- From your starting point, pace out 100 large adult steps in a direction which will take you past the Primrose plant you have located. This is a simple way of measuring approximately 100 metres. Mark the end of your measured distance with a stone or stick.
- Go back to your starting point. Walk back along the line between your start and finish points. Count the number of Primrose plants which you can clearly see on either side of you. If a plant is too far away for you to be sure it is a Primrose, don't count it.
- Record your results on the sheet provided.
- If you would like to, you can also record any other wild plants or animals you see (pages 7 & 8 have some illustrations of other species you might come across).
- When you have completed your survey(s), fold and send in the reply paid sheet.



## Other Plants & Animals of Interest



*Violets*



*Wood Anemones*



*Early-Purple Orchids*



*Lady's Smock*



*Orange Tip male and female*



*Lesser Celandines*



*Red Campions*



*Cowslips*



*Brimstone*



*Polypody fern*

## Folklore

In the not too distant past, the wild plants around us were an extremely useful resource, providing both herbal remedies for ailments and supplementary foods and flavourings.



Primrose tea was thought to be excellent for nervous disorders. Primroses were also considered to be an important remedy for muscular rheumatism, paralysis and gout. The plants were used to cure insomnia, while the roots were used medicinally as a safe but strong emetic (a substance which induces vomiting).

Superstitious folk believed that flowers blooming in winter, or a single flower brought into the house signalled death. The Welsh had a superstition that it was bad luck for a Primrose to flower before June - they must have been subject to a great deal of bad luck!

If you know of any local names, uses, recipes, traditions or superstitions associated with Primroses, please let us have details and help prevent their loss to future generations.

*Note: Please do not cook or eat any wild plants without seeking specialist advice.*

## Bring a Bit of Devon into Your Garden

The favourable growing conditions for Primroses in Devon have promoted the production of a large number of locally bred varieties, such as Primula 'Buckland Wine', which has wine red flowers. Some of these plants can be difficult to source however, because of the problems of maintaining a particular variety over long periods of time.

Why not protect your home from evil spirits (another old superstition) and grow some primroses. These could become part of a special Devon wildlife area, which will bring colour and wildlife into your garden. Wildflower seeds are obtainable from local outlets and catalogue seed merchants.



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