

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP : TARAXACUM COLLECTION NOTES TO EXPLAIN FEATURES ON ID LIST

The ID list has been devised to enable a note of features to be made, at the time of collection, that disappear in time and after the specimen is pressed.

1. Leaf Description : If hairy; with small spots or dark blotches (usually on interlobe); also plant colour.
2. Midrib : The midrib's colour is judged on the leaf front and the midrib becomes the petiole below the lobes.
3. Petiole: -The petiole's colour is judged on leaf reverse and may be a different colour at the base.
4. Wings : (on the petiole) - present or absent; note colour and whether the wings are narrow or broad.
5. Scape (stem): colour, if hairy, especially under the involucre (then described as arachnoid-hairy.
6. Exterior Bracts : Appearance - Appressed/Erect/Spreading/Reflexed/Recurved/Arcuate.
7. Exterior Bract Size and Borders: Measured in mm and colour observed of very thin edge to the bract – sometimes indistinct.
8. Exterior Bract : Colour above and underneath.
9. Capitulum (flowerhead): Diameter in bright sunlight and colour.
10. Ligule : stripe colour (very rarely may be none) but usually a mixture of the colours stated with grey/violet being very common.
11. Ligule Teeth - note if the teeth of inner tubular ligules are coloured (they may be the same colour as the ligule)
12. Style : the styles and stigmas may be exerted (prominent) or rarely they may be inserted.
13. Pollen : this may be present or absent on or around the stigmas, there may be only a few grains seen; after rain pull out anther tubes and use lens.
14. Achenes : if a fruiting head is found on the plant note the colour of the achenes or allow one of the flower-heads on your specimen to form a clock as in some cases the size and colour of the achene is diagnostic – if there is a spare stem it can be labelled and put in water for a day or so.

At the bottom of the sheet there is a space for your own comments on possible exceptional features not listed and your ideas on the identification.

Material should be collected early in the season as after late May features are found that are not typical. The right time is when they are just coming into flower, usually late March and April. Only collect good specimens – none that are grazed, mown or shaded. Gross, stressed or juvenile material should be ignored. Ideally there should be a maturing bud, flowers, and good leaves. Using a knife or trowel cut the plant off at ground level beneath the base of the rosette keeping the leaves attached to the base. If you collect a large plant it can be subdivided and about six to ten leaves preserved.

The specimen can be pressed between sheets of newspaper with the plant arranged to display its features. Large books can be used as weights to press it down if you do not have a press, put it in a warm dry place (not hot) and change the newspaper every day. Identification should be attempted (members of the SRPG can help) and then, enclosing the ID notes and any photos, it should be sent to the BSBI Taraxacum referee: Prof.A.J. Richards, High Trees, South Park, Hexham, NW46 1BT enclosing return postage. Prof.Richards determines these in the autumn so send your specimens when you have your complete collection.

Information for these notes is taken from Dandelions of Great Britain and Ireland by A.A.Dudman and A.J.Richards - BSBI Handbook No.9