

***Cochlearia pyrenaica* DC.**

subsp. *alpina* (Bab.) Dalby

Pyrenean Scurvygrass

Native

GB: Waiting List

England: Data Deficient

GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

A biennial or perennial herb of damp ledges on base-rich cliffs, also found beside montane streams and on spoil heaps. Known in Somerset only from Cheddar Gorge, where a scurvygrass was first recorded by Sole (Collinson, 1791) “on Cheddar [sic.] cliffs abundantly”. The Cheddar scurvygrass belongs to the taxonomically challenging *Cochlearia officinalis* group and has been recorded under various names, often treated as *C. officinalis sensu stricto*, for example by Gill *et al.* (1978), who suggested that Cheddar plants are remnant coastal populations. Rich (1991), Green *et al.* (1997), Preston *et al.* (2002) and Stace (2010, 2019), however, have all regarded Cheddar plants as *C. pyrenaica* subsp. *alpina*. The taxonomy of this group is still under revision (Tim Rich, pers comm. 2009). Although formerly abundant in Cheddar Gorge, this species has declined considerably in recent years. In their detailed “Cheddar Gorge Rare Plants Survey”, FitzGerald and McDonnell (1997) found it “in a good state” particularly along the roadside and on lower ledges and slopes for about 200m of the gorge, with outliers on high cliffs. It is now restricted to the south side of the gorge and no longer “in a good state”. In 2009 over 100 plants were seen on cleared ledges on the Horseshoe Bend, but these have become overgrown and no plants have been seen on the ledges in recent years. There are sometimes scattered plants at the top of the cliffs, for example on the Pinnacles, but the roadside plants seen in the 1997 survey are gone. This is attributed to the bunds of spoil created at the base of the cliffs for public safety, which have led to the loss of the regularly disturbed roadside ground favoured by this species (Liz McDonnell, pers. comm. 2009). Recent records have all been from rocks around the bus turning place in the gorge. This taxon is found in the north of England and Wales, Western Ireland and Scotland; the Cheddar population is a southern outlier.



Cochlearia pyrenaica subsp. *alpina* at Cheddar Gorge (2009). Photo: HJC

VC6

Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47155430	2009	HJC, FJR	Small patch of S side of gorge, behind bund
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47235421	2016	HJC, DEG	1 plant in crevice on rock face at top of cliffs
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47255431	2009	HJC	Over 100 pl on cliff ledges on S side of gorge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47265432	2009	HJC, FJR	1 plant on S side of gorge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47305426	2009	HJC, FJR	Small patch on E edge of The Pinnacles
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47345438	2009	HJC, FJR	2 plants on S side of gorge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47345439	2018	HJC, DL	1 on rock ledge to W of coach turning place
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47355439	2018	HJC	22 plants on rock W of coach turning place
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47355441	2016	HJC, TCGR	6 pl on rock face just W of bus turning circle
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47365440	2018	HJC, DL	2 pl on rocks at back of bus turning circle
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST475543	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Below low cliffs
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST482536	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Few plants near Totty Pot



Distribution of *Cochlearia pyrenaica* subsp. *alpina* in North Somerset (VC6) mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records