

'The flowers, anew, returning seasons bring!'
Ambrose Philips (c. 1674–1749)

We would soon notice if our woodlands lost their flowers. Along with birdsong and butterflies, flowers are among the many delights of a walk through any wood. Our woodland at Shotover is very special, and this leaflet introduces you to a selection of the wild flowers you are likely to come across whilst taking the air in Brasenose Wood and on Shotover Hill.

BRASENOSE WOOD

The woodland now known as Brasenose Wood has a documented history going back 800 years. It was once part of a Royal Hunting Forest, and has a distinctive ancient woodland flora.

Ancient Woodland Indicators (AWIs) are species that are usually confined to very old woodlands, and are slow to colonise new habitat. AWI plants are often used to identify long-established woodland.

Springtime floral treats abound at Brasenose Wood, such as **Wood Anemone** (*Anemone nemorosa*), also known as the 'wind flower'. The white star-like flowers appear in March and are not proper petals at all; they are actually white sepals, or calyx segments.

The blue flowers of **Common Dog-violet** (*Viola riviniana*) offer a lovely contrast to the white of the wind flowers. Flowering starts from March.

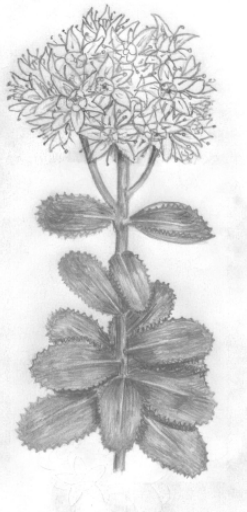
The highlight of many people's spring is the May time spectacle of the **English Bluebell** (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*). The blue hue of these flowers *en masse* is a wonderfully

evocative sight in the dappled shade of the woodland. Every now and then you will come across a white Bluebell.

Did you know that if you breathe in the aroma of a **white Bluebell** it is said to purify your soul for the coming year?

Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*) is a robust and rather strange looking plant that intrigues many people with its peculiar form. In April the 'devil's cups and saucers' appear as bright yellowy-green flowers sitting in cup-like bracts. In each cup there are one female and a few male flowers. The stems are 30–80cm tall and exude a milky latex irritant when broken.

Orpine (*Sedum telephium*) is a succulent plant with a most beautiful soft-maroon flower head that appears in the summer. It is an Ancient Woodland Indicator species.



Orpine is scarce in Oxfordshire and has suffered a serious decline at Shotover in recent years. It remains one of our most vulnerable plants in the reserve.

Standing tall in the grassy edges of the woodland is **Saw-wort** (*Serratula tinctoria*), another plant you will not often come across in

Oxfordshire. First recorded in the county in 1794, it contributes to the special diversity of Brasenose Wood. The deep-purple, thistle-like flowers appear in July.

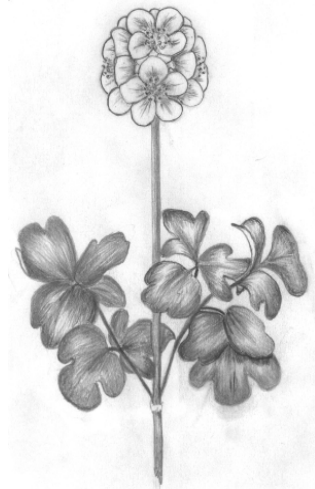
The tall, handsome **Betony** (*Betonica officinalis*) reveals its elegant magenta flowers between June and September. It bears a slight resemblance to the Dead-Nettle (it is in the same family), with leaves that are opposite each other on a square stem. It is found on many of the path edges in Brasenose Wood.

SHOTOVER HILL

The woodland on Shotover Hill is quite different to that of Brasenose Wood. It is much less mature (even though certain trees are very old) and many of the special plants are also different. This variety makes Shotover an alluring place to explore.

An enchanting and subtle wildflower known as the '**Town Hall Clock**' or **Moschatel** (*Adoxa moschatellina*) is one of Shotover's most fanciful woodland surprises. Many people walk right past it, unaware of its existence, and yet it is a fascinating plant; and this is why ...

... 'Town Hall Clock' has a cubic flower head consisting of five very small flowers. Four of them form the sides of the cube facing outwards, like the faces of a clock tower, and the fifth is on the top facing upwards!



The flowers around the clock-face sides have five petals, whilst the one on top has only four. The tiny flowers of Moschatel are pale yellowy-green, and so are

not very prominent despite the stems being up to 12cm tall. Look out for this little gem in April and May. Once seen, it is never forgotten!

Lords and Ladies (*Arum maculatum*, pictured on cover) has an intriguing name that may date from the time of powder and patch, when lords and ladies wore black 'beauty spots' on their faces, like the dark spots often seen on the large, shiny, arrow-shaped leaves.

In Britain there are over 100 folk names for Lords and Ladies, probably more than for any other wildflower we have. Favourite names include Cuckoo Pint, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Soldier-in-a-Sentry-Box, Adder's Meat, and the longest of all, Kitty-Come-Down-the-Lane-Jump-Up-and-Kiss-Me!

In April a beautiful creamy-green, cloak-like sheath appears (the spathe), and wraps itself around a dark-purple rod (the spadix) that arises from the centre. The cream spathe soon withers to reveal a stalk of green berries that change to fiery red during the summer.

May time heralds the emergence of **Yellow Archangel** (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*). The yellow petals appear in whorls around a square stem. For a plant with such a beautiful name and flowers, the leaves have a rather unexpectedly pungent smell when rubbed. They look like Nettle leaves but don't sting.

Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) is a delicate, white-flowered plant which is indeed enchanting. The flowers are unusual in having just two petals, which are two-lobed.

Remarkably, Enchanter's Nightshade is in the Willowherb family, even though, at first glance, it

looks nothing like our common Willowherbs. It is a plant of shady hedgerows and woodlands and is commonly seen both on Shotover Hill and in Brasenose Wood. It flowers between June and August.

Shotover's Rare Flowers

Shotover Wildlife has been surveying the flowers of Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood for many years and has recorded a number of locally rare plants in the reserve. Through our *Species Recovery Programme* we are managing the habitats and securing the future of some of our most vulnerable plants.

Shotover Wildlife is an independent voluntary organisation founded to research and communicate the importance of Shotover Hill for wildlife.

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Related leaflet titles:

Heathland Flowers	Trees
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WOODLAND FLOWERS

on SHOTOVER



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