

## TARAXACUM SECTION ERYTHROSPERMA

*Erythrosperma* species are largely restricted to well-drained, often shallow soils in habitats such as short chalk and limestone grassland, sand-dune grasslands, cliff-tops and sandy or gravelly heaths. Some species can also occur in man-made habitats such wall-tops, gravelly tracks, lawns or well-drained road-banks. Most species are small and delicate, so are poor competitors and rarely behave as ruderals or weeds.

In the British Isles, the abundance and diversity of *Erythrosperma* species tends to be greatest in South-east England and lowest in the North-west, although they probably occur in every vice-county, and the dunes and limestones of e.g. The Burren or Sutherland boast several species.

32 *Erythrosperma* species are recorded from the British Isles. Of these, six are endemic, and four (*T. pseudoproximum*, *T. pseudolacistophyllum*, *T. falcatum*, and *T. disseminatum*) are rare adventives with only a handful of British or Irish records and are not treated here.

The centre of diversity of the section is South-central Europe, where in thermophilous grasslands apomicts (triploid and tetraploid) coexist with sexual diploid populations (collectively known as *T. erythrospermum*) in a confusion of forms which are probably still generating new apomictic hybrid entities. *Taraxacum erythrospermum* has twice been recorded as a British adventive, but not in last 40 years. Apomictic species range eastwards to Turkey and south to Andalucía.

*Erythrosperma* species are

- small and delicate with highly dissected leaves.
- Exterior bracts are <9 mm long, usually <7 mm.
- The open capitulum is usually <30 mm in diameter, often less.
- Many species lack pollen and/or have yellow styles.
- Only one species (*T. inopinatum*) has spotted leaves.
- Achenes are frequently reddish to dark purple in colour and the cone (coloured section connecting achene body with rostrum) is narrowly cylindrical (lens)

On northern sand-dunes, *Erythrosperma* species, especially *T. haworthianum* (see below), can be confused with our two Section *Obliqua* species which have greyish achenes with a short conical cone.

### Notes

The key may have multiple leads, as indicated by letters, not just two.

Some colour terms used here

- Fulvous = close to tawny but with a bit more pink in it (= 'cinnamon' in BSBI Handbook).
- Vinous = 'wine-purple'.
- Pruinose = covered with a 'bloom' which rubs off.

# Plant Crib 3

1a. Species lacking pollen (check stigmas with a lens) or only a few grains present

(2a-2h)



2a. Ligules partly inrolled, pointed, reddish at tip; capitulum never opening fully. Achenes dark red. Inner exterior bracts erect, pruinose, red-tipped.

*Taraxacum argutum*



# Plant Crib 3

- 2b. Exterior bracts and achenes similar to *T. argutum* (above), but ligules flat, square-ended, and leaves spotted (uniquely in this section) (western England, Wales) *Taraxacum inopinatum*



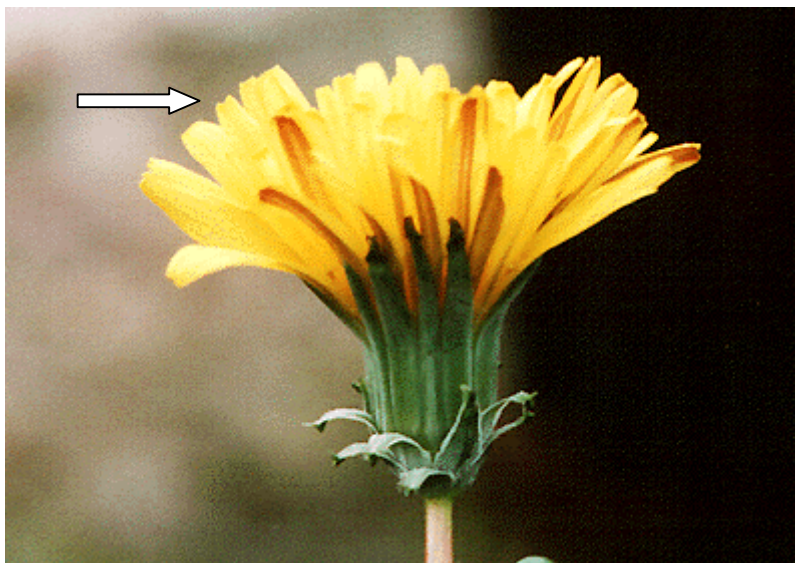
- 2c. Leaf-lobes >6 in number on each side, poorly differentiated. Leaf semi-prostrate, narrowly oblong. Ligule stripe silver-grey, ligule with blackish teeth (not illustrated) *Taraxacum glauciniforme*
- 2d. Exterior bracts <5.5 mm long, erect; achenes dark red to violet-purple when ripe (3a-3b)
- 3a. Scape completely glabrous, even at apex (lens); ligule teeth dark *Taraxacum rubicundum*



# Plant Crib 3

3b. Scape slightly pubescent when young; ligule teeth yellow

*Taraxacum parnassicum*



2e. At least the lower (outer) exterior bracts strongly recurved

*Taraxacum fulvum*



*Taraxacum fulvum*

# Plant Crib 3

- 2f. Exterior bracts spreading, heavily pruinose, bordered, <3 x long as broad, achenes dark brown when ripe  
*Taraxacum proximum*



- 2g. Exterior bracts spreading, dark green below, not pruinose, scarcely bordered, >3 x long as broad; ligule stripes brown, teeth reddish; achenes fulvous when ripe  
*Taraxacum fulviforme*



*Taraxacum fulviforme*

- 2h. Capitulum >35 mm diameter when fully open; achene body 3.5 mm, grey-brown when ripe (Orkney) (not illustrated) *Taraxacum tanylepis*
- 1b. Pollen present, usually abundant (4a-4i)
- 4a. Lateral leaf-lobes narrowly linear, expanded or even forked near the apex. Sand-dunes, scarce (5a-5b)

# Plant Crib 3

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5a. Capitulum > 30 mm in diameter when fully open; achene body dark red, 3.5 mm

*Taraxacum commixtum*



5b. Capitulum < 30 mm in diameter when fully open; achene body dark purple, <3.0 mm

*Taraxacum dunense*



# Plant Crib 3

- 4b. Ligules short, striped purple, scarcely exceeding inner bracts; exterior bracts recurved, suffused purple at least at apex (widespread, dunes, heaths) *Taraxacum brachyglossum*



*Taraxacum brachyglossum*

- 4c. Styles yellow, same colour as ligules in fresh and dried condition; leaves narrow; exterior bracts <7 mm, ovate, pale-bordered; (northern dunes) (6a-6b)

- 6a. Ligule stripe reddish; ripe achenes dark purple (*T. gotlandicum*, which has been recorded from a single location on inland limestone in north-east Scotland is similar but with dark red achenes) *Taraxacum haworthianum*

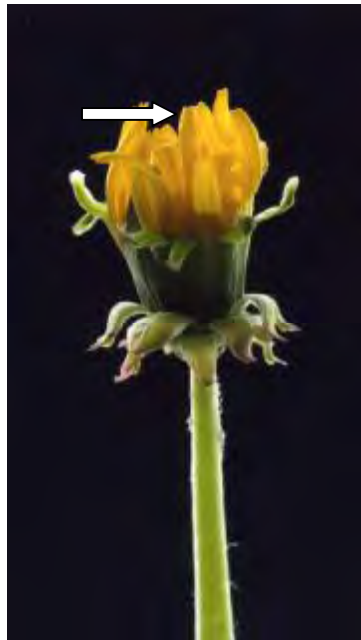
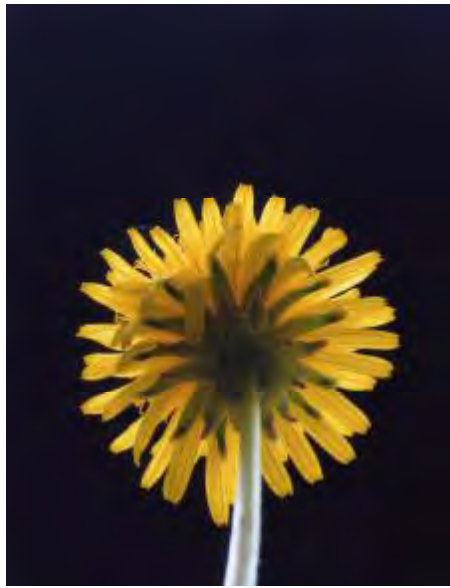


*Taraxacum haworthianum*

# Plant Crib 3

6b. Ligule stripe pale silver-grey, or absent; ripe achenes dark red

*Taraxacum limbatum*

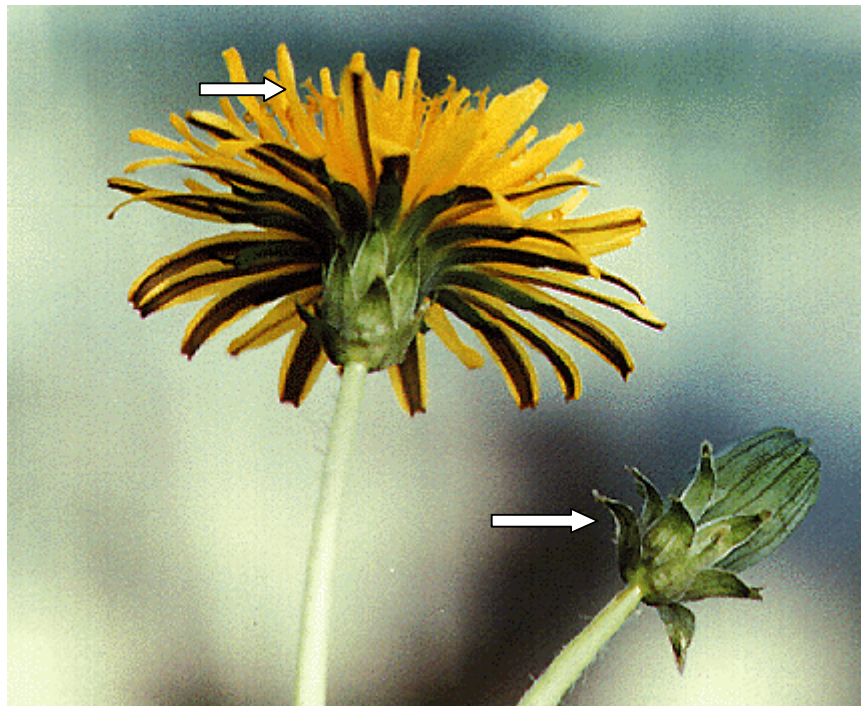


*Taraxacum limbatum*

4d. Distal margin of lateral leaf-lobes expanded at the base; exterior bracts spreading, recurved at the apex, pruinose. (7a-7b)

7a. Leaves highly contorted; styles dark yellow, drying blackish; ligule stripes purple-brown; mature achenes pale brown (sand-dunes in the south-east, rare)

*Taraxacum tortilobum*



*Taraxacum tortilobum*



# Plant Crib 3

- 7b. Leaves crisped at interlobes but not contorted; styles dark yellow, drying discoloured; ligule stripes pinkish-grey; mature achenes chestnut-red (widespread and frequent) *Taraxacum lacistophyllum*



*Taraxacum lacistophyllum*

# Plant Crib 3

- 4e. Petioles narrow, unwinged, brilliant vinous-purple below; outer exterior bracts rounded-cordate at base, conspicuously bordered; ligule stripes grey-brown (widespread and common)

*Taraxacum oxoniense*



*Taraxacum oxoniense*

- 4f. Exterior bracts erect, spreading at apex, with a conspicuous white or rose-coloured border, but not ovate-cordate at base, petioles dull rosy-green, unwinged (local and scarce) **(8a-8b)**

# Plant Crib 3

- 8a. Lateral leaf-lobes arcuate-recurved; achenes dark red when mature (sand-dunes)

*Taraxacum arenastrum*



- 8b. Lateral leaf-lobes narrowly triangular; achenes grey-brown when mature (Wales, Ireland, south-west Scotland) (not illustrated)

*Taraxacum degelii*

- 4g. Petioles dull greenish-red, winged with untidy teeth; leaf-lobes with large teeth proximally; achene body 3.5 mm, fulvous (9a-9b)

- 9a. Ligules striped dark purple; apex of inner ligules red; interlobes suffused blackish (widespread, but uncommon)

*Taraxacum scoticum*



- 9b. Ligules striped grey-violet with pink teeth; interlobes green (scarce, southern heaths) (not illustrated)

*Taraxacum retzii*

# Plant Crib 3

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- 4h.** Terminal lobe linear, sometimes expanded at apex, bearing a single pair of basal lobules; ligule stripes reddish; achenes chestnut when ripe (Breckland) *Taraxacum scanicum*



*Taraxacum scanicum*

- 4i.** Leaf-lobes sagittate, acute, scarcely dentate; interlobes green; petioles dull greenish-purple. Ligules far exceeding inner bracts, striped violet; achene body pale brown, 3.0 mm (10a-10b)
- 10a.** Petioles winged; styles yellowish in fresh and dried condition; ligule teeth purple (mesic grasslands, chiefly N England and Scotland) (not illustrated) *Taraxacum proximiforme*
- 10b.** Petioles unwinged; styles dark yellow fresh, discoloured when dry; ligule teeth yellow (chalk grassland, southern England) (not illustrated) *Taraxacum acutum*