

Lady's mantles

Alchemilla spp

STATUS

Unknown

Protected under the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended)

Listed in the relevant Red Data Book.



WHAT ARE LADY'S MANTLES ?

Lady's mantles (*Alchemilla* species) are a group of several very closely-related species which are difficult to distinguish, except by experts. This is because the plants reproduce asexually and in a manner which has given rise to several different forms, very similar in appearance, yet consistent small differences separate them.

WHERE ARE THEY FOUND IN THE UK ?

There are thirteen species in the U.K. of which three are widespread, though scarce in the south and east. The largest number of species occurs in the North Pennines.

WHY ARE LADY'S MANTLES OF CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

Nine species grow in the Durham area of which five are rare. Three are listed in the Red Data Book: *Alchemilla acutiloba*, *A. monticola* and *A. subcrenata*, and two more are nationally scarce: *A. glomerulans* and *A. wichurae*. This Plan addresses these five species.

LADY'S MANTLES IN THE DURHAM AREA

HOW HEALTHY ARE THE LOCAL POPULATIONS OF LADY'S MANTLES ?

An extensive survey of five of the six rare species in the meadows and lower pastures of Teesdale and Weardale was made by Bradshaw (1962). Until a substantial resurvey has been done, the present status will remain unknown.

A small number of recent repeat surveys indicate many roadside occurrences have gone due to road realignment, minor road strengthening and the dumping of earth on the verges. The change from meadow to permanent pasture has also adversely affected *A. glomerulans*, *A. wichurae* and to a lesser extent *A. monticola*.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT LADY'S MANTLES IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

Historically the Durham Lady's mantles and such plants as globeflower (*Trollius europeus*), wood crane's-bill (*Geranium sylvaticum*), melancholy thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*) and northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*) would have been in the tall-herb flora of the open woodlands and sub-alpine pastures from which meadows were created. Together, the rarer Lady's mantles and plants such as spring gentian (*Gentiana verna*), dwarf milkwort (*Polygala amarella*), alpine bartsia (*Bartsia alpina*) and Teesdale Violet (*Viola rupestris*) form part

of the unique 'Teesdale Assemblage' of rare plant species.

WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN FOUND IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

The Red Data Book *A. acutiloba* sometimes occurs in dense stands on roadside verges and in hay meadows. It is sparsely distributed in Weardale and Teesdale. *A. monticola* is centred in Teesdale, occasionally on upland road verges and in hay meadows, and has been recorded near Woodlands, Hamsterley and Barnard Castle. *A. subcrenata* occurs in hay meadows and some pastures around Newbiggin and Holwick, and in one hay meadow near Stanhope. The nationally scarce *A. glomerulans* and *A. wichurae* are much rarer in the area. *A. glomerulans* occurs in a few meadows, by small streams and occasionally on road verges. *A. wichurae* also occurs in meadows, by small streams, though it is more widely scattered on limestone outcrops in higher pastures.

LADY'S MANTLES ARE AT RISK FROM:

Many roadside occurrences have disappeared due to road realignment, minor road strengthening operations inappropriate grass-cutting regimes and the dumping of earth on road verges.

Nutrient rich run-off, along with the over-zealous cutting of road verges has resulted in less rich verge flora.

The strengthening and widening of farm tracks has also resulted in plants being lost.

The change from hay meadows to permanent pasture has adversely affected *A. glomerulans*, *A. wichurae* and to a lesser extent *A. monticola*.

The destruction of stream banks and courses by heavy continental cattle has destroyed both *A. glomerulans* and *A. wichurae*.

LADY'S MANTLES BENEFITS FROM:

Managing haymeadows by traditional methods followed by seasonal grazing and dung-spreading.

Sympathetic road realignment, minor road strengthening operations and sensitive verge maintenance would help contribute to their safeguard.

Lady's mantles *Alchemilla spp*

IMPORTANT HABITATS FOR LADY'S MANTLES

Upland haymeadows *

Upland acidic grasslands *

Inland rock exposures

Streamsides and waterfalls

Transport corridors- upland road verges *

OTHER SPECIES ACTION PLANS COVERING ISSUES RELEVANT TO LADY'S MANTLES

Spring gentian **

N.B. ** indicates action plan produced in 1998.
* indicates action plan to be produced in 2000.

LADY'S MANTLES AND THE LAW

These species are classified as vulnerable. They receive general protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended).

TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF LADY'S MANTLES IN THE DURHAM AREA:

Target 1 Undertake a survey to determine the present status of each rare species. 2006

Target 2 Maintain sustainable populations of Lady's mantles at all known sites and ensure that sites are managed appropriately. 2008

LADY'S MANTLES ACTIONS

ACTION	DATE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	MEETS TARGET NO.
<u>SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION</u>			
1. Continue to give high priority to the conservation of Lady's mantles on all sites.	ONGOING	DBAP, LAs, Site owners	2
<u>SITE MANAGEMENT</u>			
2. Continue to implement or encourage implementation of Wildlife Enhancement Schemes management regimes on SSSI sites.	ONGOING	EN, Site owners	2
3. Encourage implementation of appropriate management regimes (e.g. Countryside Stewardship) on County Wildlife Sites and other sites supporting Lady's mantles.	2006	DWT, EN, LAs, MAFF, FWAG	2
4. Formulate an upland road verge management strategy, based on the results of survey work, which tackles necessary management and maintenance issues.	2006	DBAP, EN, Site owners, LAs	2
<u>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</u>			
5. Resurvey a substantial number of sites first surveyed by Bradshaw (1962) to determine the present status of each rare species.	2006	EN, Local specialists, Universities & Colleges	1
6. Encourage or undertake ecological research to investigate the effects of over grazing or under grazing, cattle trampling and scrub encroachment on the conservation of Lady's mantles in the Durham area.	2006	EN, Local specialists, Universities & Colleges	2
7. Improve the standard of surveillance of Lady's mantles within SSSIs. Refine management advice if necessary to safeguard these plants.	ONGOING	EN, Local specialists	2
<u>ADVISORY</u>			
8. Ensure landowners and managers are aware of the presence and importance of conserving these species and appropriate methods of habitat management.	ONGOING	DBAP, EN	2
<u>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</u>			
9. Use Lady's mantles as flagship species in environmental interpretation and education, for conservation of upland hay meadows and road verges, and to raise the profile of plant conservation in the local area.	2006	DWT, EN, LA21	1, 2