



BSBI Conference: Trees and Shrubs Berwick upon Tweed, 9-10 May 2009

VCR Questionnaire: Status of some tree and shrub species

Background

The conference to be held in spring 2009 will be about trees and shrubs, both the more widespread alien species and 'new' species only now coming into fashion for planting. One theme will be the extent or otherwise to which such species naturalise and the habitats colonised, which is a step beyond either the *Vice-county Census Catalogue* or the *New Atlas*. In this connection **you are invited to take part in a small project**, which has the full support of BSBI Records Committee, **by completing the attached questionnaire** in Excel format for a sample of the more widespread species in this group **by end January 2009** so we can analyse the results and report on them by May.

We have tried to keep the whole exercise simple and achievable.

This is intended as a desk exercise for you as VCR or your chosen delegate. It is inevitable that you will not have available an adequate overview of the status in your VC for all the species in the list and that your response will be incomplete to that extent. If that inspires you to fieldwork that's fine, but please don't feel pressurised to do more. Some such fieldwork may be possible over the winter before you submit the questionnaire, but please don't delay submission in order to do fieldwork.

The four comments columns for each species (distribution and abundance, habitats, regeneration and other comment) are intended to draw on your subjective experience as well as what you can evidence from individual botanical records.

The questionnaire is intended to be submitted electronically in Excel by email or disc. If you are not set up to do that you should complete the forms manually and find an assistant to type it up. We are very reluctant to accept handwritten responses, as it would involve time and expense to process them, if really stuck please phone to discuss.

Objectives

Our objectives are as follows:

- Common alien species – which are naturalised and which are just planted? Which are planted *en masse*? Are there any regional differences?
- Rarer species – are there any that are naturalising?
- Habitats - what habitats are colonised by naturalising species? Trees and shrubs are clearly most often found in woodland but those colonising moorland, coastal or wetland habitats are of particular interest. (Colonisation by trees and shrubs will change a habitat to scrub or woodland, so it is the habitat before such colonisation that is of most interest)
- Fashion – what changes in fashion are evident in the species planted? What species that were planted in the past are hardly ever planted now?

Target species for questionnaire

To keep the analysis within bounds we have made a selection of about 150 species with the emphasis on species which may self-seed/naturalise. The selection includes:

- 100 neophyte species listed in the *New Atlas* table 5.9
- Some neophytes extra to above, in particular the well-naturalised species
- Some native and archaeophyte species that are native/long-established only in part of Britain but are now more widespread than formerly.

For various reasons we have left out:

- Native willows, roses and brambles
- Native climbers and ericaceous shrubs
- Most introduced willows and poplars and most *Cotoneaster* species
- 'Ground cover' sub-shrubs (*Vinca*), unless suspected of naturalising widely
- Most of the scarcer planted species usually found only as specimen trees in parks etc.

As explained below you are free to add extra species you feel to be of interest because they are naturalising in your VC or are planted *en masse* as crops, perhaps as biomass.

Outputs

Before you give of your time it is more than fair that we should set out what we hope to gain from the questionnaire. We plan:

- Species maps with one 'dot' per VC. An example is given below
- *New Atlas* style species captions with the emphasis on regeneration and habitats colonised. These will draw on your narrative, which hopefully will give us new insights
- Tables of species colonising moorland/coast/wetlands
- To learn from the results to help us plan a more constructive and uniform approach within BSBI to the recording of planted trees and shrubs.

These results to be communicated by:

- An exhibit at the spring 2009 conference for a selection of species (perhaps 20) with a talk to support this
- A follow up article for *BSBI News* or *Watsonia*: a few maps and captions with a table of attributes for the 150 species (or most of them, some will likely be boring) and discussion.

The Questionnaire

- The number of yes/no questions has been limited as they get boring to answer
- The emphasis is on the four structured comment boxes with the chance to say something unexpected and interesting
- There is an option to add at the end extra species found to be naturalising significantly (but please restrain yourself re *Cotoneaster*, as we will not be able to deal with all of these on a species-by-species basis)
- Rather than give many detailed instructions the questionnaire for VC 81, part completed in draft, is included as an example in the Excel file in a separate worksheet. Please study this example now and then read the notes on status below.

Status

Comment is limited to what might most confuse:

- Forestry/biomass crop – use code 3 in the Planted column if planted *en masse* as a forestry crop (or biomass crop for the few willow hybrids). Clearly many woods are multipurpose with timber/windbreak/fuel/amenity/conservation/game all in mind. While in such cases there may be many tree species present and no absolute divide; the main timber species are usually more or less evident. Aim for a balanced picture for the VC as a whole in choosing between codes 1, 2 and 3.
- Naturalised code 3 or Narrowly Established code 2? The term Narrowly Established is used for vegetative spread, usually by suckers, where a more-or-less-permanent patch develops. Some species become naturalised by vegetative means (spreading down a river system, for example) and should be coded as 3.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I don't record planted species?

This questionnaire is mostly about regeneration: you should have data on that. Also you probably 'know' whether many of these species are present somewhere in your VC, whether you have a formal record or not. Don't be afraid to enter such species.

What if I don't use email/Excel?

Complete the paper questionnaire and find a friend to type it up for you and email it in. If really stuck, please phone to discuss before sending in anything on paper.

What if I haven't time for all this?

The yes/no questions are quick to fill in. Then just write comment for the species you have something interesting to say about. (We need comment for all the species from as many VCRs as possible, but not all VCRs)

Help and Timetable

We, the two organisers below, hope you will enjoy taking part in this project and will both do our best to help you. **Please plan to meet our deadline: end January 2009**

Lead Organiser

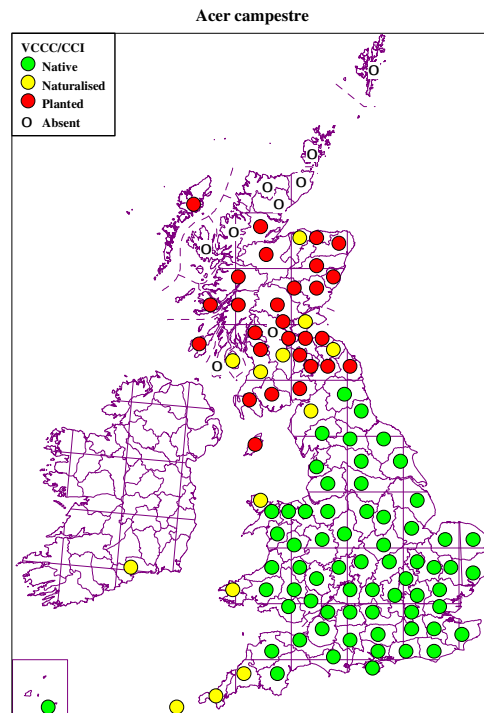
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Assistant Organiser (all completed Excel spreadsheets to be sent here)

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Example Map with one 'dot' per VC



Acer campestre mapped from the *Vice-county Census Catalogue* and the *Census Catalogue of Ireland*. The project maps will have small, medium and large dots for naturalised to distinguish seedlings-only/narrowly-established/naturalised and small, medium and large dots for planted to distinguish specimen-trees/non-commercial/commercial-forestry-or-biomass-crop. ○ for absent will be used to distinguish those VCs which have responded, but don't think they have the species, from those which have not responded at all.