



LONDON NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY

PLANTS OF LONDON'S PAST PROJECT

VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS

Preferred format for depositing data with the LNHS Vascular Plant and BSBI Middlesex Recorder (Mark Spencer) – 1st January 2021

All the data I receive is stored in the first instance with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL), it is then sent to the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). **IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Please read the LNHS rules on data protection and privacy: <https://lnhs.org.uk/index.php/about-us/dataprotection> if you have any questions regarding this, I will forward the request on to the LNHS data protection officer. All data sent electronically will also be retained in its original format, but paper records will be destroyed once the data has been stored digitally. If possible, please send data as an Excel spreadsheet or as a Tab-Delimited Text file. I will accept data in other formats but it makes life a lot easier for me if all incoming data is compiled in a similar way.

Please organise your data using the following fields and in the sequence presented.

Taxon: The full scientific name of the species recorded e.g. 'Poa annua' or 'Lapsana communis subsp. communis'. If you are unsure of your identification, you can add a comment regarding this in the **Comments** field. For infraspecific names please use the following rank abbreviations: 'subsp.' or 'var'. Named cultivated plants should be formulated as c.v. [=cultivated variety] and then the cultivar name in quotation marks e.g. *Betula pendula* c.v. 'Laciniata' or *Rosa* c.v. 'Peace'.

Site: The name of the recorded site e.g. 'Beckingfield Road'. A site name is essential and consistency is very important. I prefer to use the following format: 'Islington, Appell Street' or 'L.B. Islington, Wipstead Heath, West'. More detailed information, such as 'growing at the front of number 75' or 'by the ponds' should go in the **Comments** field. Also, it is a good idea to try and apply your site name to an area within an OS 1km square, thus if you are recording on 'Wipstead Heath' you may refer to 'North', 'East' or 'South' if other parts of the Heath cross over into adjoining 1 km squares. Incidentally, this makes life a lot easier for me! For those of you recording within the Greater London Boundary starting your site description with L.B. (for London Borough of ...) is helpful, thus the site that encompasses my home address would be 'L.B. Islington, Finsbury Estate, Skinner Street'. **If you are recording in a vice county other than Middlesex it would be advisable to contact the relevant vc recorder to check what is their preferred format for site names, see: <https://bsbi.org/local-botany>**

Gridref: The OS Grid-reference of the Site e.g. TQ123123 (use 1km or 6 to 8 figure references as you wish). Avoid spaces, commas or dashes. If you are unsure of the gridref please ensure your description of the location is as accurate as possible, the gridref can then be checked and added at a later date. A useful websites for finding out gridrefs are: <https://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm> & <https://www.cucaera.co.uk/>

VC: The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland vice-county number that the **Site** is located within (e.g. 1-113, or H1-H40 for Ireland). If you are unsure of the vc please ensure your description of the location and grid-reference is as accurate as possible, the vc can then be checked and added at a later date. Records will only be accepted for vc 21 and those areas of vcs 16-20 and 24 that are within the LNHS polygon. You can also check the vc your record is from using the OS grid reference to vice-county conversion on the Herbaria@Home website (<http://herbariaunited.org/gridrefVC/>).

Recorder: The name of the recorder(s) e.g. Mark Spencer or the LNHS Botany section. Please use the following format: 'Spencer, M.A.' or 'Bridges, S.M. & Spencer, M.A.'. If the recorder is a group e.g. a LNHS Botany section meeting; please add the group leader's name too: 'LNHS Botany, Spencer, M.A.'. It can be helpful to add the names of those you can remember in the **Comments** field.

Determiner: The Determiner is the person/group who provided the identification. Please follow the format used in the **Recorder** field. If the determination is provisional, disputed or doubtful please add a comment in the **Comments** field.

Date: The date on which the plant was recorded, this must be in dd/mm/yyyy format e.g. 04/06/2018. If the Date is a month only you can use 00/mm/yyyy. If the Date is a year only you can use 00/00/yyyy. If your date is a year range, use yyyy->yyyy (i.e. with a dash followed by a greater than sign between). If your date is a date range, use dd/mm/yyyy-dd/mm/yyyy (i.e. two dates with a dash between).

Quantity: The number of individuals recorded e.g. 2. Quantity must be a number or 0, which is equivalent to 'Present'.

Method: Please enter the method of recording as 'Field record / observation'. If this is not suitable, please contact me.

Sex: The sex of the recorded plant. I normally use 'u' (not recorded), however, you may choose to use the following: 'm' (male), 'f' (female) or 'a' (asexual).

Stage: The life stage of the recorded plant. Please enter 'not recorded'. If this is not suitable, please contact me.

Status: The status for the plant in the context of this record. Please enter 'native', 'non-native', 'planted', 'unknown' or 'not recorded'. If these are not suitable, please contact me. It can often be very hard to decide an individual plant's status, particularly in urban areas and many apparently native plants are planted, particularly where 'habitat creation' has been attempted.

Comment: Additional information, or any comments about this record. Ideally arrange your comments in the following manner:

- Note on taxon identification such as 'Determination doubtful' or 'stamens unusually hairy for this species';
- Further information regarding the locality;
- Information regarding the habitat such as 'chalk grassland' or NVC classification;
- Miscellaneous information such as additional recorders/determiners, pollinating insect or perceived conservation status.

Thus, a typical **Comment** may look like this: 'Determination doubtful, due to unusually hairy stamens for this species, third field SW of main road, near mature hornbeam, chalk grassland, site poorly managed & overgrazed'. Separating each section by semicolons is helpful as it enables me to further manipulate the data if necessary.

Please note the following general pieces of advice:

- Enter your fields as 'Text' fields in Excel, you can then use any alphabetic or numeric characters. However, with dates, please ensure the field is set up as a 'Date' field – otherwise the data may become altered when transferring to another program.
- **Taxon, Site, Recorder, Determiner, Method, Stage** and **Status** fields are each limited to a maximum of 64 characters (including spaces).
- **Gridref** and **Quantity** are each limited to a maximum of 10 characters (including spaces).
- **VC** is limited to a maximum of 3 characters.
- **Sex** must be a single character code.
- **Comment** can be any length.
- Try to be consistent in how you input your data and use punctuation, it is a lot easier to edit that way. If you are in doubt please do contact me and I'll try to do my best to help.

Hopefully, having followed the guidance above your data should look something like this:

Taxon	Site	Gridref	VC	Recorder	Determiner	Date	Quantity	Method	Sex	Stage	Status	Comment
Lapsana communis subsp. communis	L.B. Islington: Wipstead Heath, West	TQ123123	21	Bridges, S.M. & Spencer, M.A.	Spencer, M.A.	04/06/2018	1	Field record / observation	u	not recorded	native	Determination doubtful, due to unusually hairy stamens for this species, third field SW of main road, near mature hornbeam, chalk grassland, site poorly managed & overgrazed

IMPORTANT NOTE: All data sent to me will normally be freely distributed to the London Natural History Society (LNHS), Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) and the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) and used in accordance with the rules of those organisations. Please contact me, prior to depositing data, if you wish to restrict access to your data.

For further advice and information on recording go to:

<https://bsbi.org/>

Additionally, the following articles may be of help:

Harvey, P. 2008. Biological Recording In Essex: an introduction. Essex Naturalist 24; 34-42.

Harvey, P. 2008. Biological Recording In Essex: using the Mapmate recording software. Essex Naturalist 25; 33-47.