

Centaurea calcitrapa L.

Red Star-thistle

Key:

Dots refer to the native sites of the species

Numbers refer to the nearby Botanical Collections

Starting references

Family

Asteraceae

IUCN category (2001)

Critically Endangered

(Archaeophyte)

Habit

Herb (biennial).

Habitat

Waste ground and tracksides, dry grasslands and banks usually in broken or disturbed ground.

Associated uncommon species

Cornflower is often found in species-rich communities with Shepherd's needle, Spreading Hedge-parsley, Prickly Poppy, Loose Silky-bent and Corn Parsley.

Reasons for decline

Once a frequent contaminant of Rye and Flax seed, early 20th century improvements in seed-cleaning technology and the introduction of herbicides created a rapid decline. The use of nitrogen is thought to have had less impact on this species than on many others.

Distribution in wild

Country	Locality & Vice County	Sites (10km ² occurrences)	Population (plants)
England	South Downs between Brighton & Eastbourne, Sussex	7	
	E. Kent	1	100s
	S-W Yorkshire	2	casual occurrences



Ex situ Collections

Gardens close to the region of distribution of the species

- 1 RHS Harlow Carr
- 2 Harewood House trust
- 3 Yorkshire Museum & Gardens
- 4 University of Hull Botanic & Experimental Garden
- 5 Sissinghurst Castle Garden
- 6 Bedgebury National Pinetum
- 7 West Dean Gardens
- 8 Newhaven Botanic Garden
- 9 Sheffield Park
- 10 Borde Hill Garden
- 11 High Beeches Gardens
- 12 Nymans Garden (NT)

Botanical Collections with specialisation on family Asteraceae

None

Potential to grow the species in *ex situ* Collections

From Plants For A Future

- Propagation

Seed - sow April in a cold frame. When they are large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and plant them out in the summer. If you have sufficient seed, it can also be sown in situ during August/September.

- Cultivation

Succeeds in ordinary garden soil. Prefers a well-drained fertile soil and a sunny position. Tolerates dry, low fertility and alkaline soils. Members of this genus are rarely if ever troubled by browsing deer.

Conservation information

Linkages to BAPs

Designated LBAP Areas sites with records for *Centaurea calcitrapa* are listed on <http://www.searchnbn.net>

Habitat Management

Protected sites with records for *Centaurea calcitrapa* are listed on <http://www.searchnbn.net>

Conservation programmes

Seed has been dispersed by hand in at least one Sussex site.

Web References

- Plants For A Future Database: http://www.ibiblio.org/pfaf/cgi-bin/arr_html?Centaurea+calcitrapa&CAN=LATIND
- NBN Gateway database: <http://www.searchnbn.net>
- Arable Plants – a field guide: http://www.arableplants.fieldguide.co.uk/?PP=species_account&SPID=16&SHC=2&PSD=2