

Scleranthus perennis ssp. *prostratus*

Sell

Prostrate Perennial Knawel

Starting references

Family

Caryophyllaceae

IUCN category (2001)

Endangered. Endemic.

Habit

Herb (biennial or short-lived perennial).

Habitat

Acidic sandy soils in open grassland and bare areas beside tracks.

Reasons for decline

Increased use of herbicides and fertilisers.

The destruction of field-margin refuges.

The abandonment of marginal arable land and heathland.

Afforestation of former sites and potential sites for colonisation.

Deterioration of former and potential sites due to inappropriate grazing.

Loss of sites to building developments.

Distribution in wild

Country	Locality & Vice County	Sites (10km ² occurrences)	Population (plants)
England	Breckland, Suffolk (RAF Lakenheath, is one of the sites)	3	Several 1000s

Key:

Dots refer to the native sites of the species

Numbers refer to the nearby Botanical Collections



Ex situ Collections

Gardens close to the region of distribution of the species

- 1 Cambridge University Botanic Garden
- 2 Mark Hall Arboretum
- 3 RHS Hyde Hall
- 4 Writtle College

Gardens of specialisation on family Caryophyllaceae

University of Oxford Botanic Garden

Potential to grow the species in *ex situ* Collections

From Cambridge University Botanic Garden, *Conservation Collection* from the 1970s to the 1990s:

Longevity of the plants depends on the location. It is shorter in glasshouse conditions, than the ones planted out in the sand of a disused frame.

Mild weather or glasshouse protection make winter seed production possible.

Large seeds usually formed in the axils of the flowering branches are much more likely to prove viable than the smaller seeds copiously produced at the tips.

Germination noted from 10 days to 6 months after sowing, and in any month of the year. However, the bulk of the seed is always produced in July-September.

Plants in pure compost into generous sized pots, produced more seed.

Plants which were flowering in their first summer produced little seed compared to older plants. Plant that had germinated in the late winter or spring, produced even less seed or none (Annual report, 1984).

Conservation information

Linkages to BAPs

A Species Action Plan has been produced for *S. perennis* ssp. *prostratus*, lead partner is Dorothy Casey, Wildlife Trusts Tel:01473 890089

Habitat Management

All three extant populations are protected within SSSIs.

Management includes grazing and periodic rotovation.

Regular monitoring of all extant and restored sites.

Conservation programmes

The species is currently included in English Nature's Species Recovery Programme.

Plants are being introduced to three new sites. Drought and rabbit damage have caused some losses, but the introduction programme is continuing.

A seed collection has been established at RBG Kew. Plants are also being propagated *ex-situ* in a private collection for use in future reintroductions.

Web References

- UK Species Action Plan: <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=566>
- NBN Gateway database: <http://www.searchnbn.net>