



Plants to look out for in August



Small yellow flowers on plants of similar size...

Agrimony and Wood Avens both sit in the Rosaceae family, and share the characteristics of having yellow flowers measuring 5-10mm across, with 5 sepals, 5 petals and many stamens. Agrimony is the taller of the two, and both are common throughout our area.

Wood Avens / Herb Bennet (*Geum urbanum*)

This perennial plant grows up to 60cm tall, with its small yellow flowers held on long, hairy stalks. It is so common that it can be found all across our area, but only in shady places such as woodlands, hedge banks and built-up areas. Coming to the end of its flowering time now, the more notable feature of this plant is its **spiky fruits**. Each individual seed within these bur-like seed heads bears a hooked spine, which readily clings to animal fur (and socks, jumpers...) to facilitate seed dispersal.



Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*)

Also a perennial, this plant is taller (up 1m) and less branched than Wood Avens. Its leaves are densely hairy, and its flowers are arranged quite differently - **clustered together in large numbers up a spike structure**. Agrimony also produces spine-tipped fruits, and although less conspicuous than those of Wood Avens they still achieve the same purpose, of getting dispersed via animal fur or on clothing.

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Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*)

The carrot family, Apiaceae (formerly Umbelliferae) is composed of many similar-looking species, and in the region of 60 of these grow in the UK. Amongst them are found a significant number of phototoxic and poisonous species, so getting to grips with this family is a daunting prospect. Wild Carrot is a good one to look out for, because it has a distinctive **single, dark purple flower** in the very centre of the head (umbel) of otherwise white flowers. After flowering, as the fruits are forming, the whole head turns inwards upon itself, creating a pompom effect. The fruits within these heads are spiny – yet another plant that uses ‘hitch hiking’ as its mode of seed dispersal.



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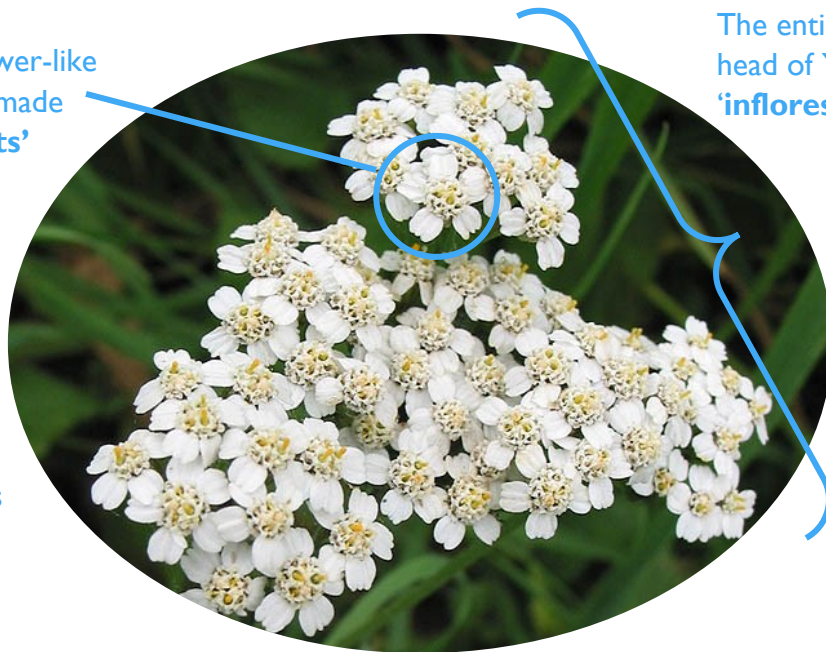
One of the shorter species of the Apiaceae family, Wild Carrot grows up to 1m tall, and its grey/green leaves are elegant with a fine filigree look to them. It is found on rough grassland, roadsides and waste ground, on dry calcareous soils.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Like Wild Carrot, Yarrow also has delicate, lacy leaves – as suggested by its Latin name. Yarrow sits in the Daisy family, Asteraceae. It will be at its best this month; take a close look at its flowering head and you will see it is made up of many small daisy-like ‘flowers’. As with all the species in this family though, what appears to be a flower is actually a ‘capitulum’ – a collection of tiny flowers, known as florets. So each one of these small daisy-like ‘flowers’ is a group of flowers, meaning that the whole flowering head of a Yarrow plant is a collection of many collections of flowers!

This ‘flower’ is in fact a flower-like unit called a ‘**capitulum**’, made up of a collection of ‘**florets**’ (tiny flowers).

The florets around the edge (‘**ray** florets’) are concerned with attracting attention, with a white petal-like ‘flag’, while those toward the centre contain the stamens and ovaries.



The entire flowering head of Yarrow is an ‘**inflorescence**’.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

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Yarrow is a perennial plant of lawns, roadside verges and meadows. Its silvery grey / green leaves are aromatic and it has insecticidal qualities, which makes it good for ‘companion planting’. A bundle of it inside your wardrobe or clothes will keep creepy-crawlies away – and it smells better than mothballs!

Traveller’s-joy / Old Man’s Beard (*Clematis vitalba*)

Last month I highlighted 2 trailing plants, which clamber through our hedgerows – black and white briony. Traveller’s joy is another hedgerow scrambler; it favours chalky areas, so is a common sight in the Chilterns. A perennial, woody climber, its leaf-stalks act like tendrils, clinging to other vegetation in order to climb upwards. In comparison with garden varieties of clematis, this one has inconspicuous flowers. They are fragrant though, and packed with stamens. They appear to have pale green petals, but these are actually sepals - petals are absent. The fruits are hard and dry, with long silky plumes attached to the seeds, facilitating wind dispersal. These plumes hold together in clumpy tangles, giving the ‘beard’ effect, which can be spotted from some distance away.



Old Man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*)

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