

# Campanula patula



## Status

UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species.

Nationally Scarce.

IUCN threat category: Endangered (2005).

## Taxonomy

Magnoliopsida: Campanulaceae

Scientific name:

*Campanula patula* L.

Common names:

**Spreading Bellflower,**  
**Clychlys Lledaenol.**

There are 16 species of *Campanula* in Britain of which only five are native. Members of the genus have blue to purple (rarely albino) bell-shaped flowers which have a lobed calyx behind and an inferior ovary.

## Biology & Distribution

It is a biennial herb of sunny, well-drained sites on infertile sandy or gravelly soils and is found in open woodland, wood borders, hedgebanks and on banks and rock outcrops. Disturbance is needed for the germination of the seeds, which are long-lived, often resulting in reappearance of the species after a long absence.

In Britain *C. patula* mainly occurs in the southern Welsh borders, with scattered localities in SE England. It is also introduced elsewhere (Preston *et al.* 2002). It has a continental distribution in W. Europe.

The decline of *C. patula* has been apparent since the 1950s. It has disappeared from many sites due to the cessation of coppicing and other disturbance in woodland, and the increased use of herbicides on roadsides and railway banks.

## Identification & Field survey

*Campanula patula* is relatively easily distinguished by its narrow leaves, widely spreading inflorescence with stalked flowers 15-25 mm long with spreading lobes which are cut to about half way down the flower, and the fruiting capsules which have pores near the apex. The calyx has 5 narrow lobes, which are entire or with 1-2 small basal teeth, and they do not have small reflexed appendages between them. The lower stem leaves may be difficult to see late in the season as they wither away.

## Differentiation from similar species

Most other *Campanula* species in Britain have larger, bell-shaped flowers. The species most likely to be confused with *C. patula* are:

- *C. persicifolia* which has flowers mostly more than 3 cm long.
- *C. rapunculus* which has basal and lower stem leaves suddenly narrowing at their base into the stalk rather than narrowing gradually, and a narrow, more columnar inflorescence.
- The very common *C. rotundifolia* which has generally smaller, nodding flowers and heart-shaped basal leaves (the stem leaves are often narrow and oblong and quite different in shape).
- The two garden plants, *C. poscharskyana* and *C. portenshlagiana*, which have heart-shaped leaves.

## Key characters

Usually biennial to 60 cm tall, without non-flowering rosettes at base of flowering stem. Basal leaves obovate to oblong, gradually narrowing into an indistinct petiole. Stem-leaves linear to obovate. Inflorescence widely spreading. Calyx-lobes linear to lanceolate, entire or with 1-2 small teeth at base. Corollas mostly 15-25 mm, cut to about half way. Stigmas less than half as long as style. Capsule with pores in apical half.

## References

- Preston, C.D., Pearman, D. A. & Dines, T. D. eds. (2002). *New Atlas of the British & Irish flora*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Stewart, A., Pearman, D. A. & Preston, C.D. eds. (1994). *Scarce Plants in Britain*. JNCC, Peterborough.



Figure 1. Illustration of key features  
(from J. E. Smith & J. Sowerby (1852). *English Botany*. London)