

Chillerton and Gatcombe parish verge survey 2020

Shining Cranesbill

The Shining Flower of the Month – May



Shining Cranesbill is native to Europe, Asia and as far east as the Himalayas and North Africa. It is common in Great Britain and Ireland, especially in the south west and west, but uncommon in Scotland. One of the best places to see it in this parish is in huge patches along Main Road Chillerton opposite the Hillside houses, although by the end of May it starts to die back and go to seed. The ridged fruit pods once it has set seed are long and pointed, just like a crane's bill.

The first flowers appear in May and by the end of July only the stragglers are left. However a few flower can keep on coming until at least the end of August and often well into September.

The leaves are glossy and roundish and often reddish. Shining Cranesbill lives on hedgebanks, walls, rocks and bare places.

While it is edible it is very bitter. It also has homeostatic properties and has been used as an agent to stop internal haemorrhages.

It is a popular bee plant despite the small size of the flowers. There seems to be little correlation between the size of the bloom and how much the pollinators enjoy it.

It is also used as a food plant by the Brown Argus butterfly, which has a fascinating life cycle – the caterpillar produces a secretion which attracts ants, who then act as a kind of Praetorian guard as the larva goes about its business.