



MIDDLETON HALL
RETIREMENT VILLAGE



A GUIDE TO PLANT LIFE ON THE WALKS FOR ALL

————— AUTUMN —————



MIDDLETON HALL

RETIREMENT VILLAGE

This booklet accompanies the Middleton Hall 'Walks for All' guide that is available from reception. It highlights the many unusual and noteworthy plants along the routes.

As there are fewer plants in flower in the autumn and winter months interesting seeds, berries, leaves and non-flowering plants have been included on the walks.

Join the path as indicated by the coloured arrows.

■ 0.5 miles (wheelchair accessible)

■ 1 mile

■ 1.75 mile

1



From the decking you can look across the pond to see **Water Mint** and **Bulrush**



Water Mint



Bulrush



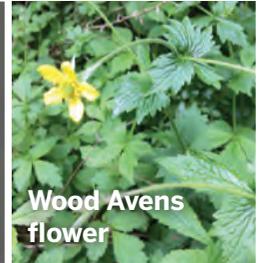
In these locations look for:

Common Nettle, Dock, Lords and Ladies/ Cuckoo Pint, Herb Robert, Wood Avens/ Herb Bennet, Great Willowherb.

By early to mid September **Wood Avens** will have stopped flowering and formed spherical seed heads. Each seed will have grown a burr which can cling on to fur or clothing, and therefore be carried away from the parent plant.

Holly berries are turning red, **Blackberries** will be ripening and **Lord and Ladies/ Cuckoo Pint** should be starting to form spikes of bright red berries.

In another week to ten days all the above berries will have ripened. Birds feast on them throughout the autumn and winter months. The seeds inside the berries are carried away from the parent plant and later deposited in the birds' droppings. This ensures each seed receives its own parcel of fertiliser which helps its growth. By being carried



some distance away from the parent plant the seedlings do not compete with the parent for light, water or nutrients when they germinate. This is the advantage of all seeds being dispersed (scattered). Ragwort and Great Willowherb have white hairs on their seeds and rely on wind for dispersal. Blackberries rely on small mammals such as mice as well as birds to distribute them.

2

3

4



By late September and well into October acorns, conkers and beech nuts litter the path

– all food for squirrels and mice.

5



Until you arrive at the gate to the allotments you are unlikely to see any plants different from those listed above. Continue through the

allotments if you are following the Red route, or for the Blue or Yellow route walk straight on.

6



This area shows the greatest diversity of plant species. Walk up the steps on the path the gardeners have cut. From here you can see:

Bindweed - appearing at first like a badly furled umbrella before opening to an immaculate, white trumpet.



Bindweed



On the banks of the ponds;
Tufted Vetch, Red Clover, Knapweed, Ragwort, Purple Loosestrife, Yellow Loosestrife, Sneezewort

Sneezewort is an unexpected name for a plant. It comes from the time in the eighteenth century when the plant was dried, ground up and inhaled as snuff, hence the reference to sneezing.

Ripening hips from the **Wild Rose** and haws from the **Hawthorn** can be seen at the far side of the pond.



6



In the pond **Bulrush, Yellow Iris/Yellow Flag**. Seed cases of Yellow Iris split open showing large, flat, circular, copper coloured seeds piled up in vertical rows. You can count yourself fortunate if you manage to see this arrangement for the wind will soon shake the plant's stiff stem causing the seeds to fall into the water where they can germinate.

Return to the path to follow the red arrows if you want to return to Reception .



Yellow Iris

7



Here it is possible to find **Red Campion** and **Herb Robert**.

As you walk through the wood don't miss the evidence of woodpecker activity on a dead tree on your right.

Leaves of Horse Chestnut and Lime may be starting to change colour, they are always the first to do so.



Red Campion

7



Some leaves show the most vivid colour changes in autumn turning red, orange and yellow. The pigments causing these colours are present in the leaves throughout the year but are normally masked by the dominant green of the chlorophyll. It is not until the chlorophyll is broken down and disappears in autumn that the other colours can be seen.



Herb Robert

8



Once through the two gates and into the new wood you are likely to find:

Bird's-foot-trefoil/ Lady's Fingers, Common Nettle, Ragwort, Great Willowherb, Spear Thistle and Creeping Thistle

The last four plants have seeds with hairs and are spread by wind.



Creeping Thistle



Spear Thistle



You will also see **Sloes** - on the Blackthorn bushes

Mountain Ash - berries turning red

Alder Trees - with next year's male catkins as well as this year's mast looking like tiny, brown cones which formerly contained the seeds.



Alder's mast



Sloes



Because of the application of grass fertiliser in late summer the field is now covered in a thick new sward of grass. Locally farmers call this new growth 'fog' and they use it for winter grazing.

A few of the grasses may be in flower. If you ever doubted that grasses are flowering plants, look just above the grass leaves to where there are thin, upright stalks of grass flowers. Grass flowers do not have petals, are normally green and somewhat insignificant.

Alternatively take a look at the image on the most recent Middleton Hall 'Walks for All' map and, among the buttercups, are grass flowers sticking straight up. Walk out of the field, across the road and take the right-hand fork

in the path if following the Blue Route ■ to make your way back to Reception.

If you had walked up the path between the trees before Autumn 2018 you would not have seen any flowers in the undergrowth. This was almost certainly due to lack of light caused by shading from the trees above. The undergrowth and lower branches of the trees have now been removed and it is probable that some autumn-flowering plants have managed to colonise the area (twelve summer-flowering plants had done this by late May 2019). Any new colonisers are likely to be plants you have already seen on this walk, so perhaps you can name some for yourself.

9



Walk out of the field, across the road and take the left fork in the path ahead. Along the fence you will find:

Horsetail, White Clover, Buttercup, Great Willowherb, Red Clover, Common Mouse-ear, Scentless Mayweed, Ragwort, Creeping Thistle, Spear Thistle



Horsetail



Common Mouse-ear

10



Between the two five-barred gates leading to this location you may find:

Ragwort, White Clover, Red Clover, Scentless Mayweed

This field was cut in early autumn and contains **Buttercup, Scentless Mayweed**



Scentless Mayweed



Continue to the wet area around location 11.

Bulrush – this year’s heads are starting to open,

Bird’s-foot-trefoil/Lady’s Fingers – if you wonder why the latter name evolved please look at the illustration and that should explain the derivation of fingers.

There are several wild flowers whose name includes the term Lady’s. The Lady referred to is the Virgin Mary. The flowers were given these names in about the fifth century during the Anglo Saxon period. This provides us with a glimpse into the impact the new religion of Christianity must have had upon people then and how they incorporated aspects of it into everyday lives.

A third name for Bird’s-foot-trefoil is Lady’s Slipper. With a bit of imagination you might manage to make the two lower petals of an individual flower into a small slipper.



**Bird’s-foot-trefoil/
Lady’s Fingers flower**



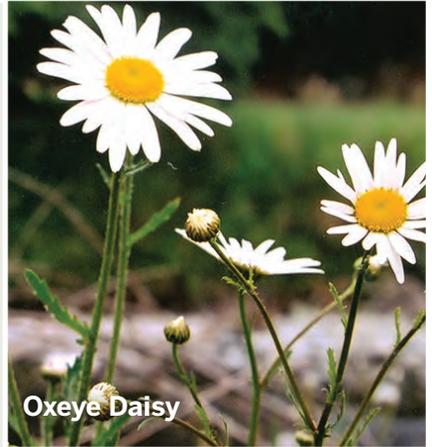
**Bird’s-foot-trefoil/
Lady’s Fingers seedhead**



Here there is:

**Rosebay Willowherb, Greater
Bird's-foot-trefoil, Red Clover,
Ragwort, Knapweed, Oxeye Daisy**

Follow the arrows from the top of
the lake back to Reception.



Explore our scenic grounds and discover
the fascinating variety of flora and fauna

Circular routes to suit people of all mobilities,
from 0.5 to 1.75 miles in length

All walks are easy to follow, with clear way markers

There are plentiful benches and picnic areas on which
to sit and appreciate the surroundings

No stiles

Please ensure dogs are kept on their leads

Dog waste bins installed at intervals around the grounds



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Many thanks to Christine Wright for researching
and editing this booklet which includes images from
our photography group.

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