

# Plant Survey

## Objectives

To give you an opportunity to build your plant identification skills and encourage you to monitor wild plants on your land.

To build a qualitative description of the overall biodiversity value of each field as a habitat for waders.

To collect baseline information on the presence of wild plant indicators in each field.

## Method

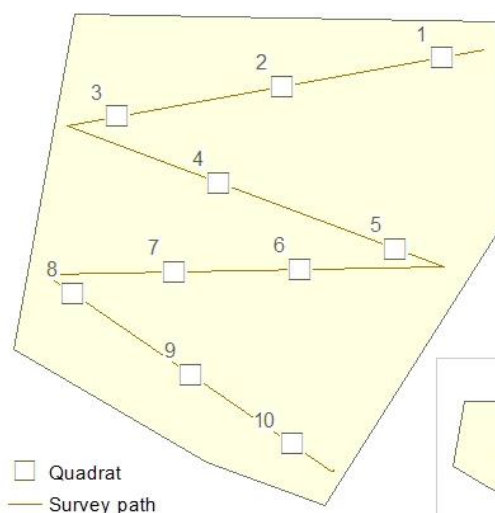
### You need

- A Plant Recording Sheet for each field
- A 1 m x 1 m quadrat
- A clipboard and pencil
- Plant identification guide

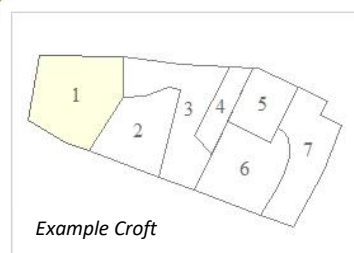
A quadrat is a square frame used to outline a small area in the field. You can make one with 4 bamboo canes tied with string in the corners, or narrow boards. Make sure each side of the square in the inside of the frame measures 1 m.

### Survey guidelines

Carry out the plant survey in the same fields you have been measuring vegetation in. Aim to record plants between mid-June and mid-July (31 July at the latest), when most plants are in flower. You will collect a list of the species present in 10 locations in each survey fields. You can use the same route as in the previous surveys, roughly following a W-shape across the field. Your records should give a representative picture of the whole field, covering for example the wetter and drier parts of the site. If there are distinct vegetation types in a field (e.g. improved grassland and wetland), survey them separately. Mark the boundary on a map.

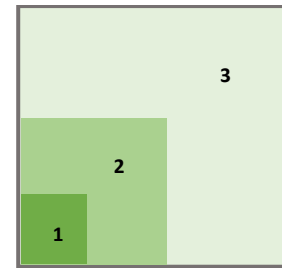


*Plant survey in field 1*



*Example Croft*

At the first location in the field, place the quadrat flat on the ground. In column 1, you will record all the plants from the list that are present within the square. First focus on a small area in one corner (1) and check the species that you are seeing. Then increase the area that you are looking at (2) and note any additional plants. Finally look at the whole quadrat (3) and add the plants present. Move to the next location and repeat the process to fill out columns 2 to 10. For each survey field, you will have 10 lists of plants present.



*Plant observations in a quadrat*

The plants listed are indicators, their presence gives information on the conditions they are growing in, such as the acidity of the soil, its wetness, the intensity of grazing etc. For example, bird's-foot trefoil, eyebrights and red clover grow on dry, neutral or basic soil in short, grazed grasslands. Bogbean, marsh cinquefoil and marsh marigold are found in wetlands.

The plants in the list are common in Shetland and have distinctive flowers. The ones that may be confused are grouped together. Use the photographic guide to help identify species. If you find a plant that you are not sure about, take a photo of the flower and if possible the leaves and send it by email to [nathalie.pion@rspb.org.uk](mailto:nathalie.pion@rspb.org.uk) or ask on the WhatsApp group if you use it.

If the field is a silage park or crop, you don't need to survey 10 quadrats but include a brief description at the bottom of the sheet. If there are trees or shrubs adjacent to the field, tick the box. You can also add observations in the Notes box. For example, if a plant that is not listed is abundant in the field, you could write it down.

In the column 'Other', you can tick species that you have seen in the field but haven't occurred in the quadrats.

You only need to record plants once in the season. This will be your last survey for the project. Once you have completed it, send back all your recording sheets so we can collate the information. We will send you a report for your croft/farm and use your records to inform the wader habitat scorecard and management guidance.

We encourage you to take photos when you are out surveying and send them to us. Thank you.