

Serrated Wintergreen, *Orthilia Secunda*

Description

During the last half-century in Britain and Ireland, the population of serrated wintergreen has been in decline, particularly in Wales and Ireland.

The plant is 10 to 20cms tall, or less. The bell-shaped, pendulous flowers are white to greenish-white with the white stigma protruding. In midsummer the flowers form a terminal spike with each blossom arranged along one side of the flowering stem. The evergreen oval leaves form a loose, irregular basal rosette. The leaf margin is very finely toothed.



Flowers are sparingly produced from June to early August, and fruiting in August and September. They attract bumblebees which collect nectar and pollen, but the ability to self-fertilize is probably very important in this species. Very little published work exists specific to serrated wintergreen biology or population ecology, but a Russian study suggests seed is only transient in the soil (Thompson *et al.*, 1997).

Distribution

It is rare and never abundant in just a few scattered stations in Northern Ireland. It is very local in western Fermanagh, where it grows in rock crevices, on ledges of upland scarps and scattered on steep, moist, mossy, heather and bilberry-clad, scree slopes below these cliffs on the Lough Navar plateau. Although we do not have a definite tree-line as such, in Fermanagh it also occurs in this 'montane' manner under the protection of low-growing heather and bilberry subshrubs.

Action

Areas of the scarps which are its local headquarters in Western Fermanagh are protected by their ASSI status.

Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=4595>

MLA Species Champion

