



# Yarrow

Latin Name	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Family Group	<i>Compositae</i>
Life Cycle	Perennial
History	

Yarrow is native in meadows and pasture, banks, hedgerows and waysides, very common in Britain, especially on sports fields and heathland golf courses. Yarrow is a persistent weed of grassy banks and roadsides but not waterlogged areas. It is found on soils between pH 4.7 and 8.0. Yarrow has roots that penetrate to 20 cm deep. It can withstand drought and thrives even on a poor dry soil. Yarrow is considered to be an indicator of loam. It prefers an open habitat and is a natural component of chalk grassland but is absent from woodland.

In the Middle Ages, Yarrow was part of a herbal mixture known as gruit used in the flavouring of beer prior to the use of hops. Old folk names for Yarrow include Arrowroot, Bad Man's Plaything, Carpenter's Weed, Death Flower, Devil's Nettle, hundred leaved grass, Nosebleed, Old Man's mustard and Seven Year's Love! The English name Yarrow comes from the Saxon and Dutch words 'Gearwe' and 'Yerw' respectively.

Yarrow has also been used as a food, and was very popular as a vegetable in the 17th century. The younger leaves are said to be a pleasant leaf vegetable when cooked as spinach, or in a soup. Yarrow is sweet with a slight bitter taste. Yarrow has many herbal uses but can cause skin irritation and rashes.

Physical Appearance	Creeping, broadleaf type. The creeping stems produce finely divided, dark-green, fern-like leaves on short stems. Erect stalks produce flat-topped clusters of strongly scented white or pink flowers from June to August.
Situation	Yarrow grows on all soils, but thrives on dry, undernourished or slightly acid conditions. Sold in the Garden Centres for the Herbaceous Borders for a few pounds a pot!
Growth	Yarrow is not thought to form a persistent seed bank although seed remained viable for at least 5 years in cultivated soil. In undisturbed soil, the depth of burial is an important factor in seed persistence. Seed viability in dry storage was around 30% after 10 years. Yarrow seeds may be dispersed by wind. Seed has been found in horse droppings, and seedlings have been raised from the excreta of various birds. In pasture the shallow rhizomes simply spread out from the parent plant at 7-20 cm per year. On cultivated land the rhizomes are easily broken up by tillage operations and the fragments spread around. Regeneration can occur from single node fragments but the shorter the fragments the greater the mortality with depth of burial. Fragments 4 cm long fail to emerge from below 15 cm.
Flowers	Yarrow flowers from June to October. The flowers are insect pollinated and self-incompatible. Plants may need to reach a minimum size before flowering. Seeds are set from July onwards. A plant may produce up to 6,000 seeds. The average seed number per stem is 210.  Fresh seed requires a period of after-ripening. Seed germination increases after a period of dry-storage. Germination is greater in the light and in alternating temperatures. Seedlings require an open site in which to become established. Seedlings emerge from January to October but the main period of emergence is from March to April.

Leaves	Leaves feathery, long and narrow, easy to recognize even when plant not in flower.
Reproduction	Yarrow has a well-developed fibrous root system and prostrate stems that root at the nodes and become far creeping stolons. The plant has branched rhizomes that generally remain in the top 10 cm of soil. There is a high degree of apical dominance in the rhizomes unless fragmented by cultivation. When fragmentation occurs more of the buds develop on the smaller fragments than on longer pieces where apical dominance is quickly re-imposed and bud development inhibited.
Cultural Control	<p>Yarrow over winters as leaf rosettes that give rise to the leafy flowering shoots in spring.</p> <p>As a natural component of chalk grassland it has been included in seed mixtures to restore arable land back to grassland. It germinates best when the vegetation is cleared, somewhat less well if the vegetation is cut, and poorly if the vegetation is left uncut. Germination was high when the seed was sown on chalk grassland grazed by rabbits.</p> <p>Where it has been sown in mixtures with grass it can sometimes spread too rapidly. Pastures should be close grazed with sheep in spring and early summer, although excessive early grazing can favour the weed. Sheep eat the plant when the leaves are young. Applications of nitrogenous manures will reduce yarrow growth as will liming. In roadside verges, increased cutting frequency has no effect or slightly increases the frequency of yarrow.</p> <p>Yarrow does not survive regular cultivation.</p>

## Chemical Control

We hear it all the time that Yarrow is very difficult to control - in fact it is one of the easiest weeds to control as the leaves are so soft and fern like, giving a great surface area for absorption of the chemical and it shows rapid responses to chemical application.

The selective herbicides are known to be successful in controlling this weed and there are others that are not listed which are equally as effective -

Mascot Bastion T - Fluroxypyr and Mecoprop - P (Rigby Taylor)

Spearhead - Clopyralid, Diflufenican and MCPA (Bayer)

New Estermone - 2,4-D & Dicamba (Vitax)

Relay Turf - Mecoprop - P, MCPA & Dicamba (Headland Amenity)

Mascot Super Selective - Mecoprop - P, Dicamba, MCPA - (Rigby Taylor)

**Always read the product label - use Pesticides safely**

**For advice and Contract Pesticide Application Services  
please telephone 07000 481011 or email  
spraying@weedfree.co.uk**