

NOTES FOR THE PLANT RECORDING FORM

General

You may not be able, or have the time, to fill in all details on this form. Don't worry – the main thing is to provide an **accurate** set of information, even if it isn't complete in every detail. There are a few essential items: these are highlighted below with a grey background.

Headline Details

Recorder	The name of the person or persons who made the field observation.
Determiner	If someone more expert provided an identification either on the spot or later, enter their name here.
Ref	Leave blank.
VC	Vice-county (11=South Hants, 12=North Hants, 8=S Wiltshire, 22=Berkshire). If unsure, leave blank.
Time at site	Give the time spent actively searching and/or recording.
Site Name	Use a name from the Ordnance Survey maps. If there isn't one nearby, use a direction from the nearest, such as "NW of Strides Farm"
Parish	Only provide this if you are sure of the civil parish of the site.
Grid Ref	If you are recording from a 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 map, give a 6-figure reference ('SU412063') by measuring on the map grid. If you are using a GPS, you should be able to give an 8-figure reference ('SU41280635'). In woodland or other difficult conditions, it's worth recording the precision of a GPS reading if your unit gives one.
Date	The date of the observation in the field.

Site Details

Although the sketch map isn't obligatory, it can be one of the most useful items. It helps to show just which parts of the site you surveyed, and provides one of the best guides for later surveyors.

General Habitat Description	This doesn't need to be technical. 'Short chalk downland turf' or 'Beech woodland' are useful, but the more detail the better.
Sketch Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Show features such as slopes, tracks, boundaries or landmarks that are reasonably permanent ▪ Show the extent of the plant populations surveyed ▪ Show a North arrow ▪ Your map doesn't have to be accurately to scale (or beautiful!), but it helps to include notes on the size of patches.
Area	If you're able to estimate the total area surveyed, enter it in square metres.
Altitude	In metres, from the Ordnance Survey map. If there's no spot height close by, interpolate between contour lines or give the height of the contours above and below. Eg: '55m', '10m-35m'
Aspect	If there's a slope, state which direction it's facing: eg 'N', 'SW'
Slope	As an estimated percentage or a percentage range: e.g. '25%', '10%-25%'. Make sure you evaluate the slope 'side on'; it's easy to overestimate a slope looking directly up or down it.
Substrate / Geology	Only if you're sure of the details. Better to use visual evidence rather than data from a geological map, as there may be superficial deposits.

Population Details

The main thing we are after here is an indicator of the population **size**, not its relative abundance or other measures that we might collect for an ecological study. You need to make two things clear:

- **What are you counting?** If the plant is annual or rosette-forming it may be easy to count individuals. With tufted plants you may count tufts or flowering stems, but make it clear which. With scattered or lawn-forming plants it's best to count flowering stems; with low-growing creeping plants an area estimate will be more meaningful than a head count.
- **How good is your estimate?** If you're not doing an exact count, use a measure that shows what the likely range is.

Possible ways to record:

- **Exact count** ("23"). Do this if you can confidently count all the individuals or flowering stems etc.
- **"At least" estimate.** ("400+"). This and the next are good methods to use if you can make a visual assessment of the population but do not have the time or resources to count the lot. Estimate the average density over the whole area; choose a representative plot (say a square metre, or a 1-metre corridor) and count the individuals in that; then multiply up by the number of plots in the area. Allow for situations like tail off in abundance towards the edges of the area. This estimator is useful if you are confident of your lower limit, but haven't been able to assess the full amount of ground the plant may cover.
- **"Logarithmic" estimate** ("100-1000"). See the notes for the preceding method. Use this method if you can confidently put an upper limit on the population size. Ranges are: 1-10, 10-100, 100-1,000, 1,000-10,000, 10,000+
- **Relative abundance** ("F"). Do this when counting is not feasible. Since we are not expecting you to take statistical samples, a simple subjective estimate will do. The "DAFOR" scale is defined differently in various circumstances: we suggest the following:
 - **Dominant:** ground cover > 50%
 - **Abundant:** ground cover 25%-50%
 - **Frequent:** ground cover 10%-25%
 - **Occasional:** ground cover 2%-10%
 - **Rare:** ground cover < 2%

But these will only be meaningful if used with the final measure:

- **Area of coverage:** do this when you're not able to do an estimate. Give the dimensions (length and breadth) of each patch taken into account.

Additional Notes

This is a good place to put any observations about, for instance:

- the state of health of plants;
- actual or potential threats to the plant or its habitat;
- changes observed since a previous visit;
- factors that affected the accuracy or completeness of the record.

Associated Species List

Space permits only a brief abbreviation of the scientific name. If you have difficulty with this, leave the reverse of the form blank.

Record associated species in the close vicinity of the target plant. If it's restricted to one habitat, and there are other habitats interposed between the areas you recorded, don't record from these. For instance, if you have a stream running between two patches of a dry grassland species, don't record from the stream.

Put a line through the abbreviated name of any species you record. **Don't** put the line through the number alongside. If you strike something out in error, put an 'x' by each end of the line.

If in doubt, leave it out!