



Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*)

Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiny-Feie



Background

A vibrant, early-flowered orchid that is found on the Ayres NNR.

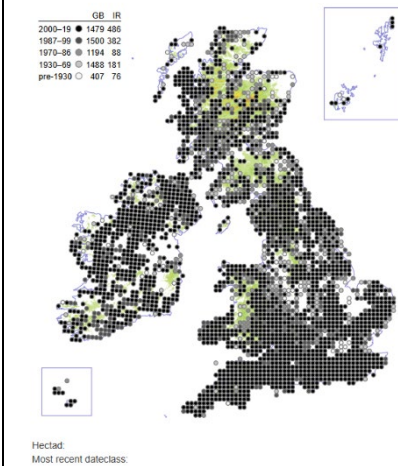
Description



A medium sized native orchid that is one of the earliest (along with Lesser Twayblade) to flower in year (April to May).

It is a perennial that grows from tubers that enable it to survive dormancy from late summer late winter. It has a restricted root system as most nutrients and water are gained through symbiotic fungi.

British Isles Distribution



The BSBI distribution map of this species shows it to be widespread in the British Isles, including the Northern Isles.

Isle of Man Distribution



Most Early Purple Orchids occur at the Ayres where they have been recorded since 1934. The species has been recorded over a 2.7km (Louise Samson pers comms).

A single plant has occurred at Glen Maye (road verge) for over a decade.

Records north of Peel and at the Ballaugh Curragh have been checked and not found.



Habitat and Ecology		
<p>This is thought of as a woodland species but grows in a range of neutral to alkaline sites including grassland, ditches and on the Isle of Man, dunes. It is tolerant of soils ranging from sand to clay, and damp (but not wet) to moderately dry.</p> <p>This species is slow to spread to new sites (it is an ancient woodland indicator in UK) but forms very long-lived colonies. Like all orchids it will rapidly disappear if soils become enriched with nitrogen or phosphate.</p>		
Legal protection		
Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and red-listed under <i>Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022</i> .		
Threats		
<p>The Glen Maye plant is now declining in condition as habitat has become unsuitable (planting of ornamental bulbs, infrequent mowing and trampling).</p> <p>The Ayres population seems secure, however sea-level rises threaten this entire coast.</p>		
Reason for BAP		
The species is now confined to a single site in the Isle of Man and requires a second safe population on the Island for its future security.		
Aims		
<p>To introduce this species to MWT Billown Nature Reserve (extension area outside of ASSI) to create a second safe population on the Island.</p> <p>To collect seed from the Ayres NRR population to direct sow into MWT Billown Nature Reserve (extension area outside of ASSI).</p>		
Linked BAPS		
Chalk Fragrant Orchid BAP Shaking Grass Action for Wildlife Project and related BAPs		
Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
Use seed from Ayres NRR to direct sow into MWT Billown Nature Reserve (extension area outside of ASSI)		<p>The species does not readily colonise new sites and may not germinate in the absence of existing plants with associated mycorrhizae.</p> <p>Success of seeding operations will not be apparent for over 5 years.</p>
Delivery Plan		
Strategy		Lead
Collect seed from Ayres NRR in late July 2025 and sow to new site on same day.		MWT (with DEFA as Ayres NNR landowner and Colas as Billown landowner)
Continue to manage Ayres in favourable manner for species.		DEFA
Action	Timing	Responsibility



Sow	July '25, '26	MWT
Graze	July-Oct	MWT
Monitor	May, annually	MWT/DEFA
Annual Updates		
Year		
2024	DEFA project approval granted on 20/11/24 DEFA with the following condition, 'the collection methods and details must be agreed with the DEFA Biodiversity Warden, prior to works, and written into an ASSI consent (which will be made out to DEFA – FALD and copied to MWT). If works are on DEFA land, then a byelaws authorisation will be included within the consent. If any work is on MNH land, then the MNH byelaws must be taken into consideration (see MNH).'	

