Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*)

Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyn-Feie

Background

A species of perennial woodland grass that had widely been used as ornamental species in woodland gardens.

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been reformatted from a Rare Species Action Plan, produced by Wildflowers of Mann in 2004, and approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in the same year.

Description

The species has a fine pendulous habit and has been widely used as an ornamental species for woodland gardens.

British Isles Distribution

A European species recorded throughout the British Isles except on Orkney, Shetland and the Hebrides. In northern Scotland, the species becomes very rare.

Isle of Man Distribution

Noted in the New Atlas of British and Irish Flora (1984) as extinct from the Isle of Man, Wood Melick was re-found in 2008 at Narradale (Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland) below a waterfall. A reliable report, in 2009, of Wood Melick growing on sea cliffs at Clay Head needs to be verified.

Formally, Wood Melick was recorded at many Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites including Silverdale, Glen Maye, Ballure Glen and Glen Killey (Churchtown), as well as other sites.

Habitat and Ecology

Wood Melick is a perennial woodland grass. It is fairly shade tolerant but not competitive. It tends to grow less than 40 cm tall, often growing in single species patches, spreading slowly both by seed and rhizomes.

It tends to grow on shaded banks over very well drained, often base-rich, soils. It is a reliable, ancient woodland indicator species.

Legal protection

Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and red-listed under *Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022*.

Threats

The dramatic decline of this species in the past 100 years is not due to habitat destruction – all of the listed sites still exist as woodlands.

A change from coppiced oak/hazel to ornamental woodland, has increased shade and decreased periodic disturbance. This is probably the cause of the decline. It is likely that even the Narradale population will eventually disappear without positive management (which would be difficult to establish).

Reason for BAP

Risk of Island extinction.

Aims

Establish at Hairpin Woodland Park.

Linked BAPS

Woodlands for Wildflowers, Action for Wildlife and associated BAPs.

Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
The Wildflowers of Mann already has several seedlings of Wood Melick (from Narradale seed), which will be established at MWT Mullen e Cloie Nature Reserve in habitat beds. From these stock plants, the species can be introduced to receptor sites.		
Opportunities to establish the species in other suitable sites should be taken, should the appropriate conditions become available.		

Delivery Plan

Strategy	Lead
Suitable receptor sites would be dry woodland banks, within either woodland pasture, or in-rotation coppice woodland. The only site that could match this description at the moment, will be the Ohio receptor site. However, this will not be in coppice rotation for some time, so the species should be held in nursery conditions in the interim.	Manx Wildlife Trust

Action	Timing	Responsibility

Establish in habitat beds.	2009	Wildflowers of Mann
Introduce to Ohio Plantation.	2011 Onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor.	2011 Onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Review.	2012 Onwards	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture
Verify 2009 report of Wood Melick growing on sea cliffs at Clay Head.	2025	Wildflowers of Mann

Annual Updates

Year	
2010	Introduced to Ohio Plantation.
2011	Ohio project stalled and later abandoned due to windblow.
2017	Two plants planted at Claughbane (Hairpin Woodland Park) and producing seeds.
2018	Further planting at Claughbane (Hairpin Woodland Park) and seedling emerging at base of plants from 2017.
2019	Seedling count at Hairpin Woodland Park already in hundreds, with seedlings being produced by seedlings.
2022	Some planting at MWT Billown Nature Reserve extension site, in shady damp areas. Hairpin Woodland Park plants continuing to spread, including now crossing paths and new colonies forming up to 30 m from original plantings.