



The following key includes all the commonest species in the three counties, plus a selection of the rarer or more distinctive ones. See checklist or county floras for status. Without making it unwieldy, I have tried to add a few confirmatory characters for each species, so if something 'keys out' but does not fit the description, it may be worth checking some of the species which are omitted from the key. For a range of photos see

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cladoniophile/albums/72157630469734372>

Some species are extremely poisonous and the juices of a few can irritate the skin. Handle with care. Wash hands before eating.

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|----|--|---|
| 1 | Flowers yellow or yellowish | 2 |
| 1a | Flowers white or pinkish | 5 |
| 2 | Leaves 1-pinnate, covered in fine hairs, hence matt-finish, smelling sweetly of parsnip when crushed; fruits 5-7mm, flattened oval.
Wild parsnip (<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>) | |
| 2a | Leaves 2-pinnate or more repeatedly divided. Not hairy. Not smelling of parsnip. Fruits smaller or not flattened. | 3 |
| 3 | Leaf segments broad (1cm+), rounded-triangular. Leaves glossy yellow-green. Fruits 4-5mm, broad rounded oval, black when ripe. Alexanders (<i>Smyrniolum olusatrum</i>) | |
| 3a | Leaf segments much narrower, linear. Leaves not yellow-green, fruits narrower, not black. | 4 |
| 4 | Leaf segments linear, 5-50mm x less than 1mm, smooth-sided. Leaves much-branched in all directions, not mainly in one plane. Upper leaves 2-3-pinnate. Smells strongly of aniseed.
Fennel (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>) | |
| 4a | Leaf segments broader, 10-15mm x 2-3mm, finely toothed at edges. Leaves branched more or less in one plane. Upper leaves often 1-pinnate. No aniseed smell.
Pepper saxifrage (<i>Silaum silaus</i>) | |
| 5 | Stem spotted or blotched with purple | 6 |
| 5a | Stem not spotted or blotched, though sometimes generally purple-tinged. | 7 |
| 6 | Stem roughly hairy, strongly swollen below each joint in stem. Leaves dark green. Umbels up to 10cm diameter. Fruits 5-6mm, narrow, almost cylindrical, spreading outwards characteristically. Up to 1m tall. Rough chervil (<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i>) | |
| 6a | Stems smooth and hairless, not conspicuously swollen, often with whitish bloom. Leaves pale green, often flecked with creamy-white. Umbels mostly less than 5cm diameter (small for a large plant). Fruits 2.5-3.5mm, short-oval, slightly flattened. Up to 2m tall. Smells 'mousy' when crushed. Hemlock (<i>Conium maculatum</i>) | |

- 7 Bracts (leafy or scale-like structures at base of main umbels) absent (rarely, 1-2 small ones may be present; a few species are keyed both ways) **8**
- 7a Bracts present, 3 or more. **22**
- 8 Bracteoles (leafy or scale-like structures at base of sub-umbels) absent (rarely, 1-2 small ones may be present) **9**
- 8a At least 3 or more bracteoles present, often conspicuous. **13**
- 9 [3 choices]**
- 9a Leaves ternate (divided into 3 equal parts (like a clover-leaf), each part may be subdivided) **10**
- 9b Leaves pinnate (divides symmetrically, more than 3 leaflets at each division) **11**
- 9c Leaves rounded, palmately divided, with about 5 lobes radiating from middle. Umbels with only 3-6 flowers in a dense cluster up to 7mm. across.
Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*)
- 10 Leaf segments broadly oval, lobes up to 4 x 8cm, with toothed margins. Plant creeping extensively with underground rhizomes, often forming large patches.
Ground-elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*)
- 10a Leaf segments very narrow, rarely more than 3mm wide, not toothed. A slender plant not putting out runners. **Pignut** (*Conopodium majus*)
- 11 Leaf segments broadly oval with toothed edges, at least 5mm wide, many leaves simply pinnate. **12**
- 11a Leaf segments very narrow, rarely more than 3mm wide, not toothed. Leaves 2-3-pinnate or –ternate. **Pignut** (*Conopodium majus*)
- [Three choices]**
- 12a Plant creeping with underground rhizomes, often forming large patches. Leaflets often very unsymmetrical at the base, narrowly tapered on one side and bulging on the other. **Ground-elder** (*Aegopodium podagraria*)
- 12b Plant not creeping. Leaflets usually with symmetrical bases. All leaves simply pinnate. Lowest leaves with only 2-3 pairs of lobes, which are often 6-10cm long. Stem with strong ridges, hollow, brittle, usually hairless.
Greater burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella major*)
- 12c Plant not creeping. Leaflets usually with symmetrical bases. Basal leaves and upper stem-leaves simply pinnate, but lower stem-leaves (i.e. intermediate) usually 2-3-pinnate. Lowest leaves usually with 4-6 pairs of lobes, which are up to 2.5cm long. Stem unridged, solid, tough, usually minutely hairy. **Burnet-saxifrage** (*Pimpinella saxifraga*)
- 13 Bracteoles broader, pointed-oval, some about 2mm wide, and at least half as broad as long **14**
- 13a Bracteoles very narrow or bristle-like. **15**
- 14 Annual, seldom more than 80cm tall, basal leaves dying before flowers appear. Strongly smelling sweet-musty. Stems almost hairless. Fruits prickly, 3mm long.
Bur-chervil (*Anthriscus caucalis*)
- 14a Perennial, often 80-150cm. Basal leaves remaining green at flowering. Not strong-smelling. Stems hairy, fruits smooth, 6-9mm long.

Cow-parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)

- 15** Leaf segments broad, at least 1cm across on basal leaves. Plant up to 2m tall or more. **16**
- 15a** Leaf segments narrower, less than 5mm wide. Plant small, usually up to 50cm, rarely 1m tall. **19**
- 16** Plant almost hairless. Leaves 1- or 2-pinnate, with neatly-oval leaf segments. **17**
- 16a** Plant roughly hairy all over. Leaves 1-pinnate with irregular, angular segments. **18**
- 17** Leaves 1-pinnate, plant creeping in wet places, rooting at the joints. Numerous umbels, in angles of upper leaves. Stem and leaves usually pale bright green. Fruits elongate-oval, not flattened. Seldom as much as 1m tall.
- Fool's watercress** (*Apium nodiflorum*)
- 17a** Leaves 2-3-pinnate, plant upright, with a single main umbel at top of stem much larger than any others. Stem often purplish, leaves dark green. Fruits oval-circular, flattened. Up to 2m tall. **Wild angelica** (*Angelica sylvestris*)
- 18** Umbels with 10-20 rays each 2-12cm long. Leaves up to 1m, irregularly toothed and usually with blunt segments, hairy on upper surface. Rarely more than 2-2.5m tall. Fruit 7-8mm. **Hogweed** (*Heracleum sphondylium*)
- 18a** Umbels with 50-150 rays, each 15-30cm long. Leaves up to 2.5m long, with serrated edges and long-pointed segments, usually hairless on upper surface. Often up to 5m tall. Fruit 9-11mm. **Giant hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
- 19** Each sub-umbel with 3-4 narrow green bracteoles, up to 1cm long, pointing downwards on the outer side of the umbel. Leaves dark green, rather flat. **Fool's parsley** (*Aethusa cynapium*)
- Bracteoles small and inconspicuous, not pointing downward. **20**
- 20** Leaf segments triangular and lobed. Fruits covered in long spines **Knotted hedge-parsley** (*Torilis nodosa*)
- 20a** Leaf segments narrow, parallel-sided. Fruits smooth. **21**
- 21** Lowest leaves soon withering after stem is produced. Rays of sub-umbels longer than fruits, so heads not spherical. Stalks of upper leaves shorter than leaf blades. Fruits smooth, oval, with just the style projecting at top. In dry places **Pignut** (*Conopodium majus*)
- 21a** Lowest leaves remain green. Rays of secondary umbels very short, so head of ripe fruits appears almost spherical. Stalks of upper leaves often longer than leaf blades. Fruits each with 2-3 short points around upper edge, in addition to the style on top. Beside water. **Water-dropwort** (*Oenanthe* spp.)
- 22** Bracts pinnate, conspicuous, about as long as rays of main umbels. Central flower in each umbel usually dark red. Fruits covered in long, hooked spines (longer than diameter of fruit), rays curving inwards so umbels becoming concave and tangled in fruit. **Wild carrot** (*Daucus carota*)
- 22a** Bracts linear or oval, usually inconspicuous, usually much shorter than rays. Central flower not dark. Umbels not becoming concave when fruiting. Fruits smooth, or with shorter bristles. **23**

[Three choices)

- 23a** Leaves 1-pinnate **24**
- 23b** Leaves 2-3-pinnate or 2-3-ternate **28**
- 23c** Leaves rounded, palmately divided, with about 5 lobes radiating from middle, glossy. Umbels with only 3-6 flowers in a dense cluster up to 7mm. across. **26**
Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*)
- 24** Plant roughly hairy all over. Leaves 1-pinnate with irregular, angular segments, individual lobes 4-10cm long. Fruits flattened oval, 6-11mm. **25**
- 24a** Plant almost hairless. Leaves with neatly-oval leaf segments, each segment up to 5cm long. Fruits rounded or cylindrical, 1.5-3mm. **26**
- 25** Umbels with 10-20 rays each 2-12cm long. Leaves up to 1m, irregularly toothed and usually with blunt segments, hairy on upper surface. Rarely more than 2-2.5m tall. Fruit 7-8mm. **Hogweed** (*Heracleum sphondylium*)
- 25a** Umbels with 50-150 rays, each 15-30cm long. Leaves up to 2.5m long, with serrated edges and long-pointed segments, usually hairless on upper surface. Often up to 5m tall. Fruit 9-11mm. **Giant hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
- 26** Creeping perennial water-side plant forming large clumps. Stems hollow, fleshy or succulent. Many long leaves growing vertically from horizontal stem. Umbels with 7-18 rays of fairly equal length, the shortest at least half the length of the longest. Bracts pointing downward, many of them 3-pointed. Fruit 1.5-2mm, globose. **Lesser water-parsnip** (*Berula erecta*)
- 26a** Upright biennial plant growing in dry places. Stems solid, tough. Basal leaves few and spreading. Umbels of 3-10 very unequal rays, at least one ray is less than half the length of the longest. Bracts wavy or horizontal, usually simple. Fruit 2.5-3mm. **27**
- 27** Smells like parsley when crushed. Umbels with rays of very irregular lengths. Longest bract usually longer than shortest ray. Lobes of lowest leaves 3-6cm long. **Corn parsley** (*Petroselinum segetum*)
- 27a** Unpleasant smell like petrol when crushed. Rays less unequal, usually with one much shorter than the rest. All bracts less than half as long as shortest ray. Lobes of lowest leaves 0.5-3.5cm long. **Stone parsley** (*Sison amomum*)
- 28** Leaf segments triangular and lobed, with finely-toothed margins. Leaves covered in short, stiff, forward-pointed bristles on both surfaces. Fruits covered in short curved spines. Plant tall, upright and slender, up to 125cm. **Upright hedge-parsley** (*Torilis japonica*)
- 28a** Leaf segments narrow, parallel-sided, without teeth on margins. Leaves hairless or nearly so. Fruits smooth. Plant shorter and spreading. **29**
- 29** Many leaves remaining green at flowering. Stem becoming hollow after flowering. Basal leaves usually with lobes 3-5mm long. Stem leaves with linear segments, usually with central lobe much longer than side lobes. Umbels with 6-12 rays. Bracts absent or 1-2 present. Fruit with stigma (point on top) remaining upright as fruit ripens. **Pignut** (*Conopodium majus*)
- 29a** Most leaves withered and yellow at flowering. Stem remaining solid. Basal leaves usually with segments 5-10mm long. Stem leaves with linear segments, usually with central lobe about equal to side lobes. Umbels usually with 10-20 rays. 5-10 bracts. Stigma turning down as fruit ripens. **Great pignut** (*Bunium bulbocastanum*)