

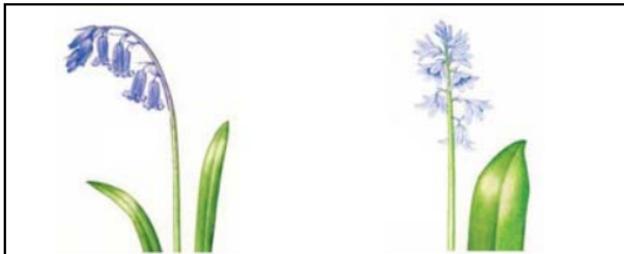
Why only English Bluebells are being planted

This leaflet outlines the reasons for planting only English bluebell and avoiding the horticultural versions sold in garden centres.

Further references are provided if you are interested in studying this further.

BLUEBELLS BELONG to the plant group of **hyacinths** (scientific family name: *Hyacinthaceae*, formerly *Liliaceae*). However there are many separate species which are as different from each other as humans are from common chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes* (family: *Hominidae*).

WHEN THE British mainland became separated from Europe only a restricted number of plants and animals lived here. The bluebell species *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* was one plant which thrived in Britain's moist rich woodland soils. It is usually called just 'Bluebell' in southern England, but also has a variety of local names including Granfer Griggles, or Cra'tae (meaning crow's toes, Mabey, 1996).



[after C. Hart Davies]

H. non-scripta

H. hispanica

BLUEBELLS ARE one of the earliest flowers to appear in British woodlands, and are a slightly dainty plant with all their heads nodding downwards or 'bidding' in the same direction. In continental Europe *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* is comparatively unusual. They have many other hyacinths and squills each with their specific distribution and unique features. *Hyacinthoides hispanica* frequently grows in west Iberia and has been planted in British gardens (it is also called Spanish bluebell here). This plant has stronger firmer stems supporting larger flowers on all sides.

***H. hispanica* produces fertile hybrids with *non-scripta* totally outcompeting *H. non-scripta* in urban Britain.**

BRITAIN HAS a unique natural ecology where, over centuries, animals such as caterpillars or butterflies became dependant upon particular plants for their food but are unable to eat recently introduced plants. There is a rich diversity and interlinked complexity between many plants and animals. It is vital that we do not over-simplify this biodiversity.

WE MUST also be aware of only viewing life from the human-based anthropocentric aspects of the world; which limits our full understanding and opportunities to make wise decisions.

References:

'Flora Locale strategy' [www.floralocale.org]

'Flora Britannica', Richard Mabey. 1996



If you are interested in botany refer to the **Plantlife** website [www.plantlife.org.uk] and read about '**Bluebells of Britain**'

Oct. 2010

Preston Park, Brighton