

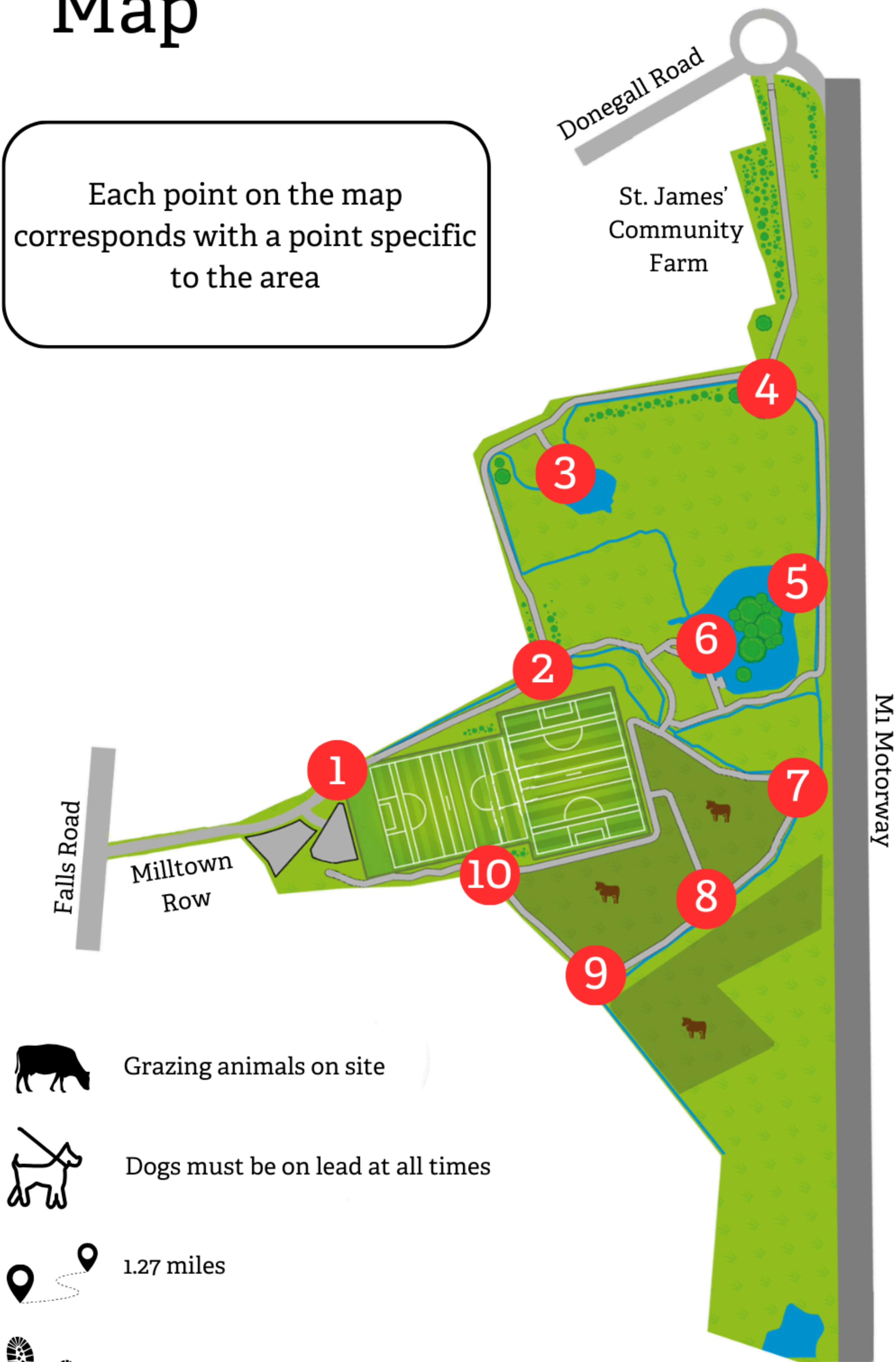


Blossoms and Blooms



Map

Each point on the map corresponds with a point specific to the area



Grazing animals on site



Dogs must be on lead at all times



1.27 miles



3,000 steps



Easy Terrain



Introduction

Welcome to the summer flower walk. We hope you enjoy the beautiful blooms today.

Flowers not only enhance our experience of Bog Meadows, they provide nectar, a necessary food for butterflies and bees. In return, the insects collect pollen, helping ensure a new generation of flowers next summer. They have a close relationship, depending on each other to thrive.

As beautiful as our wildflowers are, please refrain from picking them as they provide vital nectar and seeds to our wonderful wildlife.



1. Himalayan balsam

Brought to the UK by Victorians for stately gardens, in 1893. Himalayan balsam has escaped from gardens and become highly invasive.

It wreaks havoc along riverbanks, growing vigorously, outcompeting native species for space. It has a shallow root system, so without the stability provided by native plant roots, the riverbanks collapse.

You may see it growing along the banks here at Bog Meadows as seeds are brought in via the streams. Look out for us every year working to control it by removing the plant before it can set seed. Without this vital work it would quickly invade the whole area.



2. Great willowherb

Great willowherb is a large deep pink flowering herb that flourishes on damp ground near rivers and ditches.

It provides nectar for pollinators, particularly hoverflies and food for the stunning elephant hawk-moth caterpillars which we appreciate seeing when moth trapping at Bog Meadows.

Come back in autumn to see birds munching on the fluffy seed heads which become a natural bird table.

Great willowherb is also known as 'Codlins-and-cream' and was used in the traditional herbal treatments for bowel problems.



3. Marsh marigold

Look across the reedbeds to spot beautiful, bright yellow marsh marigolds.

Marsh marigold is a buttercup-like flower with very large, rounded leaves which thrive in damp conditions.

Also known as Kingcup or Herb of Beltane, in the Isle of Man, where it was believed to be a powerful protection against witches. In County Antrim, children would push a blossom through the letterbox of every house in the village, as a token to ward off evil.

It's a great plant to add to a wildlife-friendly pond, providing shelter for frogs and early nectar for insects.



4. Common spotted orchid

The common spotted orchid is the most common here and a delight to have in the wet meadows.

In the right conditions the flowers can carpet an area with their delicate, pale pink spikes.

They are tricky to spot in winter but from June to August you will see the beautiful varied flowers ranging from white and pale pink through to purple, with darker pink spots and stripes on their petals.

The flowers are highly perfumed and attract a range of bees, butterflies, and day-flying moths.

If you leave a spot in your lawn unmown, you may be rewarded with some common spotted orchids along with the butterflies they will attract. For ideas about wildlife gardening see [#LetNatureIn](#)



5. Yellow iris

The large (1m high), sunshine-yellow flowers of the yellow iris brighten up the margins of our streams and ponds.

Also known as ‘flag irises’ its characteristic yellow drooping petals fold back on themselves and hang down around the outer edges of the flower.

Thought to be inspiration for the French fleur-de-lis symbol.

In Greek mythology, Iris was the goddess of the rainbow and in Celtic folklore, it is associated with water spirits and believed to protect travellers from harm helping them navigate treacherous waters.

Here at Bog Meadows it helps stabilize soil at the edge of the wetland and provides shelter to invertebrates which provide food for our frogs, newts and birds.



6. Meadowsweet

Meadowsweet is a tall wildflower, growing up to 120cm high in woodlands and grasslands.

The small white creamy-yellow flowers grow in frothy clusters called cymes.

It is edible and used as a flavouring, tasting of hay, almond and vanilla and used to make mead or meadowsweet blossom wine. It has a lasting fragrance and in times past, dried flowers were scattered across floors to perfume homes. Historically used as a medicinal tea reports vary on its safety and effectiveness.



7. Ragged robin

The pink, frayed flowers of ragged robin are an increasingly rare sight as our wild wetland habitats disappear.

Ragged robin have much-divided, pink flowers and narrow, grass-like leaves. Bees enjoy nectar that its star-shaped blooms provide.

It's a perennial that can take up to three years before it blooms.

The name arose because the flowers are reminiscent of a simple garment from medieval times called a ragged robin.

The Celts believed if you drank or bathed in water into which this flower had been placed, it would increase your knowledge and make you eloquent.

This once common plant is threatened by habitat loss. If you have a wet boggy area of your garden or a pond, this would be a great plant to grow.



8. Bittersweet

Bittersweet, also known as woody nightshade, has pretty purple flowers with bright yellow stamens.

The name comes from the berries that taste sweet and bitter when chewed.

Although not as poisonous as Belladonna, another plant in this family, these bright red, cherry tomato-like berries are toxic and can cause serious illness if eaten. The leaves of bittersweet smell of burnt rubber when crushed. Tomatoes and potatoes are in the same plant family.

In the Middle Ages people believed bittersweet could remove a witches spell and they would hang garlands of it around animals necks for protection.



9. Buttercup

Buttercup is a familiar and well-loved summer flower.

There are lots of different varieties, seen across meadows, gardens, and roadsides.

They vary in height with buttery-yellow flowers and shiny petals. They are closely associated with children said to represent joy, youth, happiness, and friendship.

Holding the flower under your chin is said to symbolize if you like butter. The reason behind the buttercup's magical ability to make chins glow is due to the large amount of UV light the flower can reflect. As many pollinators, including bees, have eyes sensitive in the UV range, this is how the buttercup uses its unique appearance to attract insects.

When the wet meadows are in full bloom you will see beautiful displays of swallows and house martins as they feed on the many insects drawn to the buttercups.

It was once believed that swallows fed their young on a diet of these flowers, giving them prophetic abilities and clear sight.



10. Bush vetch

The pinkish purple flowers of bush vetch can be seen scrambling throughout the hedges around Bog Meadows from spring to the end of summer.

Sometimes called 'Poor Man's Peas', bush vetch is a member of the pea and clover family. Whilst we may prefer a sweet pea plant, insects do not see flowers the way we do, the colours, shapes and scents of our native flowers suit the insects that live here.

Vetch was one of the first crops grown by Neolithic people and scientists today are researching them as a possible protein supplement of the future.

Would you consider allowing some room for this pretty plant if it begins to grow in your garden?



We hope you enjoyed our beautiful wildflowers.

Recent studies indicate that insects have declined by 50% since 1970. If each of our gardens had more native wildflowers it would do wonders for our local ecosystem.

Gardens have a natural seedbank if you have enjoyed the flowers today try leaving a patch in your garden and see what grows.

Enjoyed this self-led walk of
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve?

You can help protect this special
haven for wildlife by becoming a
member of Ulster Wildlife today.

www.ulsterwildlife.org/join



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**



**Ulster
Wildlife**

Charity No: NIC101848