

British Plant Communities is the first systematic and comprehensive account of the vegetation types of this country. It covers all natural, semi-natural and major artificial habitats in Great Britain (but not Northern Ireland), representing the fruits of fifteen years' research by leading plant ecologists. Over 250 plant communities are described in the five volumes, with tabulated summaries of their vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens, and full details in the text of the composition and structure of the vegetation, its relationships to habitat factors and its occurrence in characteristic spatial patterns and successions. For most communities and their sub-communities there are also maps showing their distribution throughout Britain and all the vegetation types are related to their nearest equivalents in mainland Europe. For each major group of communities an introduction outlines the range of floristic variation and relates it to important environmental influences, and a key provides the reader with a means of identifying vegetation types encountered in the field. There are indexes to the communities and to their existing synonyms, and to all the plant species encountered in the survey. An extensive bibliography gives full details of the numerous literature references cited.

British Plant Communities is the outcome of work funded by the Nature Conservancy Council at Lancaster and other universities to provide a scientific basis for the description and assessment of our vegetation resource. It breaks new ground in wedding the rigorous interest in the classification of plant communities that has characterised Continental phytosociology with the deep concern traditional in Britain to understand how vegetation works. It represents a major contribution to European plant science and is likely to set the standard for vegetation description in Britain well into the next century. It is intended as a working tool, offering a reliable framework for a wide variety of teaching, research and management activities in ecology, conservation and land-use planning.

Cover illustration: Michael Proctor

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