



Giant Fescue (*Schedonorus giganteus*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

Background

A woodland grass, that was only recognised as an Isle of Man native in 2012.

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



A tall, late flowering grass of damp, semi-shaded and moderately fertile conditions.

British Isles Distribution

This is a widespread species in the British Isles, but rarely found in the Highlands of Scotland and absent from the Western and Northern Isles.

Isle of Man Distribution

On the Isle of Man, it has been listed as absent as recently as the 2002 *New Atlas of British Flora*. An unverified, and rather unlikely record from Marine Drive in 2003, is the first known mention on the Island. In 2012, an extensive population in the central valley was recorded, where it was found to be common along at least two kilometres of the River Dhoo. Plants were numbered in the thousands.

In 2015, a second site was discovered in Elfin Glen, with just one plant. The plant can be described definitively as a previously overlooked native species to the Isle of Man.

Habitat and Ecology

The Giant Fescue is by no means a real giant, and at about 1-1.5m tall, is comparable with False Oat-grass. This is a late flowering grass of woodland, woodland edges, and light shade. Its distinctive violet nodes make it readily identifiable at all times of the year. Its pendulous, spreading, long-awned flower head, lends a graceful look to the plant. This is in stark contrast to the early flowering, tall fescue which is very upright and imposing.

It is probably an ancient woodland indicator species on the Isle of Man, as it is elsewhere in the British Isles, but is too rare to be useful in this respect, and would appear to easily colonise secondary woodland.



It is a plant of base-rich, but not overly fertile soils, and appears to be one of the few plants able to compete with dense Wild Garlic. The plant disperses through seed, with the long, barbed awns allowing the seed to be spread by attaching to fur and clothing.

Legal protection

Not listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 (the discovery of this species post-dates the last revision of Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act but it may well be a qualifying species) and amber-listed under *Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022*.

Threats

One strong population within the Central Valley. However, the secondary location of Elfin Glen, only has a single plant.

Reason for BAP

To ensure the continued Island presence of this species.

Aims

The strategy over the next five years, is to reinforce this species at Hairpin Woodland Park.

Linked BAPS

Woodlands for Wildflowers Action for Wildlife related Biodiversity Action Plans.

Delivery Options

Active

Challenges

Delivery Plan

Strategy

It has proved to be an easy plant to grow in cultivation and new stock is easy to establish from seed.

Introduction would be easiest by establishing small plants in potted trees that will be planted into Cloughbane Plantation from 2016. Its need for the more base-rich soils, will lead to establishment targeting efforts on the lower slopes and path edges.

Lead

Manx Wildlife Trust

Action

Timing

Responsibility

Maintain plants in cultivation MWT Mullen e Cloie Nature Reserve.

2016 onwards

Wildflowers of Mann

Raise plants in pots with native trees.

2016 onwards

Wildflowers of Mann /Isle of Man College

Plant with trees in Hairpin Woodland Park.

2016-2021

Wildflowers of Mann

Monitor.

2017 onwards

Wildflowers of Mann

Annual Updates



Year	
2016	Seed collected and sown.
2017	7 plants planted at Hairpin Woodland Park.
2018	Plants well established and seedlings evident, further planting.
2019-2022	Plants very widespread along paths at Hairpin Woodland Park and actively spreading around site.
2023	Seed sown at MWT Billown Nature Reserve in shady areas.

