

More invasive plants!

Last year we took a look at some invasive plants that are making a nuisance of themselves in Norley and have been taking a lot of time and effort to be controlled. This time we are looking at the opposite end of the scale: Things which are known to be serious problems elsewhere, but have not really established themselves in Norley. Not yet.

First: The well-known **Giant Rhubarb** (*Gunnera* sp.) Popular in large garden ponds due to its huge size; with leaves a metre across and stems up to 2 metres high it is a real showstopper. But it takes up a lot of space, crowds out native vegetation and blocks waterways. An invasive non-native species (INNS), it is a Schedule 9 plant which means that it is an offence to plant it in the wild or allow it to escape.



It could cause much damage in Norley where a welcoming environment awaits it with our meres, open ponds and damp woodland. At least, it wouldn't go un-noticed for long!

Second: The **Japanese Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera japonica*) is a non-native and Schedule 9 species that has escaped, and is already growing here in Norley. This has similar flowers to our friendly old honeysuckle but grows on a much larger scale. It can grow up to 10 metres and smother a tree with its hairy twining stems and coarse leathery leaves. Fortunately all of the Norley escapees seen so far are not particularly vigorous – there is a weedy specimen behind the rubbish bin at the Norley Road/Norley Lane junction.



And now for something different! A weed which just popped up in our garden, to add to the many already there, was a variety of **Soft Shield Fern** (*Polystichum setiferum* var *proliferum*). This is a handsome plant which differs from the normal fern by propagating from bulbils rather than spores. (see photos). It grows in shady woodland and propagates remorselessly. It is a very attractive garden plant, so what's the problem?



In Australia, it is known as Mother's Shield Fern and is an invasive weed problem. It shows every sign that it could also become so here!

So, we're looking for some feedback from Norleans here. It has only recently been added to the British list. My observation is an extreme case of "Recorder Bias" and it is likely to be thriving in other gardens locally. Let us know if you have seen it – you could be honoured with what will be only the second English record. It's there somewhere, I promise!

A few more clues: After this last mild winter, last years' fronds are still partly green. And look out for the conspicuous 'thumbs' on the pinnules (leaflets). But, particularly, look for the bulbils. Good luck!

Written by Roy Bowden

Habitat Mapping in Norley in 2026

As reported previously, Norley Wildlife Group have been conducting **Phase 1 Habitat Surveys** in Norley since 2021. The mapping provides a baseline against which any future biodiversity improvements can be measured. Over the period 2022-2025, NWG have held a total of 53 survey days covering 27 sites. These surveys include woodland, grassland, ponds, hedgerows, and field margins and have focused on designated wildlife sites and surrounding land and corridors connecting these sites.

In 2026 we are including the smaller areas of Common land in Norley: Gazebank, Yearsley's Lane, Bratts Bank, having covered the larger sites: Wickentree Waste and Flaxmere Moss in 2025. We are also intending to survey the vegetation along the paths and bridleways of Norley. We have just started our surveys for 2026, so you may see us out and about in the village often on a Monday afternoon recording plants along the way.

Forthcoming Events: (Full list available online)

- 17th July – 9th August Big Butterfly Count
- 30th August Bat Walk
- 5th September Norley Garden Show

Our Volunteer Work Days:

- 22nd July 10am Wickentree bracken switching
- 23rd August 10am Memorial Garden Maintenance
- 27th September 10am Memorial Garden Maintenance

We have many jobs to do, and any extra help would be fantastic.

For more information on any of these volunteering opportunities please contact us.

The Team at Norley Wildlife Group

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