

# Newtown Road Cemetery

## Plant of the Month

### Lady's Smock aka Cuckoo Flower *Cardamine Pratensis*

These are mentioned in Shakespeare's song.  
"When daisies pied and violets blue and  
lady's smocks all silver white....."



In the days before Persil, girls used to spread their dresses, or smocks, outdoors to bleach them.

This seems to be a very good year for them in the Cemetery where they are flowering earlier than usual - possibly due to the strange weather we have had and perhaps encouraged by the increased light levels resulting from the recent tree work.



This attractive plant, up to 2 feet tall, likes to grow in wet meadows and the flowering period is April to June which coincides with the time when the cuckoo can be heard. The petals are pale and may be pink, lilac, or white. It may seem a bit surprising that it belongs to the plant family

Cruciferae which also includes cabbages.

Sometimes you may see patches of white foam that look like spit on the plant. This is produced by mini-beasts called frog hoppers, also known as spittle bugs, and when you look closely, you may find a baby one nestled in the foam. In order to evade predators such as birds or beetles, the adults are amazingly athletic, being able to jump up into the air by as much as 70cm!

While carrying out a recent survey, an Orange Tip butterfly was seen, and it is interesting to note that lady's smock is a food source for this species. In folklore, the plant is sacred to fairies and should never be taken indoors.



Come in and enjoy it in its natural habitat.

**Joan Stacey**

For more information go the Friends Nature Group section at  
<http://www.fnrcnewbury.org.uk/nature.asp>