

Newtown Road Cemetery Plant of the Month

Yarrow *Achillea Millefolium*



Due to the vagaries of the weather, we have been having lately, everything in the Cemetery is looking pretty dried up and autumnal already. However, one species is putting on a really good show and you will see the very white flowers of Yarrow in many areas (a few are slightly pink).

This pretty plant, up to 12 inches tall, belongs to the very large Compositae family and is in flower from June to August. It is called a creeping horizontal plant because it develops long runners, which take root at points along their length to create new plants. It can be a tiresome weed being difficult to eradicate. In its

favour though, gardeners may use the chopped up fern like leaves to improve the efficiency of their compost heaps.

In the past, it was valued by herbalists to encourage wounds to heal, to treat colds and fever, with some possible useful digestive benefits to mention just a few. The ancient Greeks even had a myth that bathing in Yarrow water would confer immortality!

Practitioners of witchcraft valued it, perceiving it to promote courage and dispel negative energy and as an ingredient in love potions since it was associated with the planet Venus.

Nowadays, we can more usefully recognise it as being an excellent source of nectar for pollinating insects and it can also be used in cooking – the chopped up leaves may be added to soups and stews.

Joan Stacey