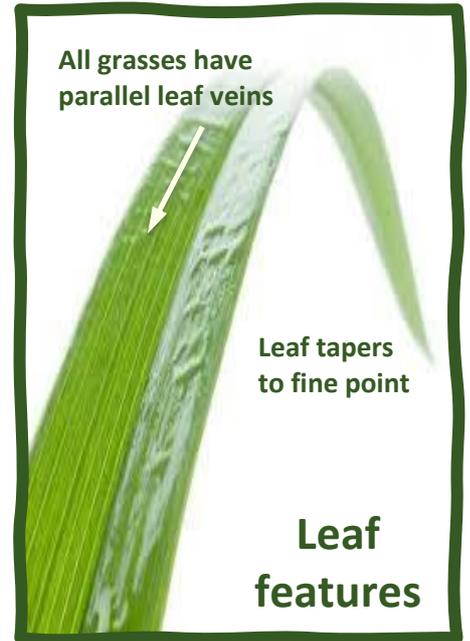
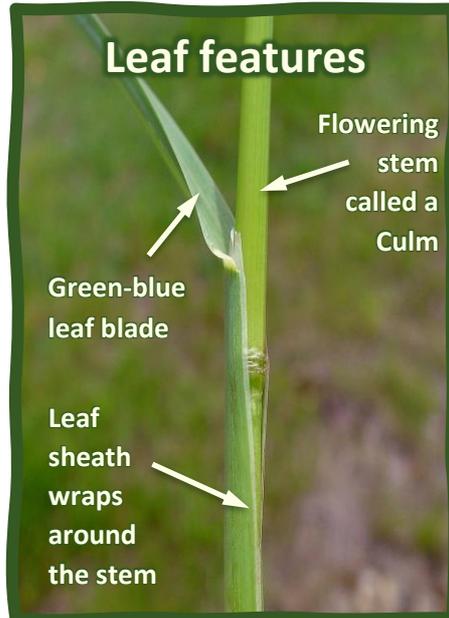
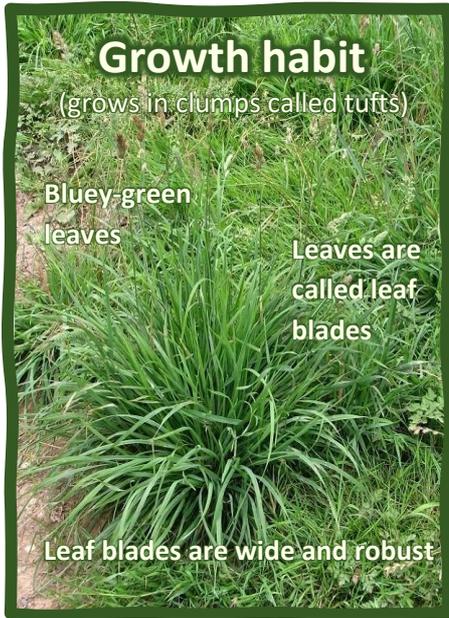
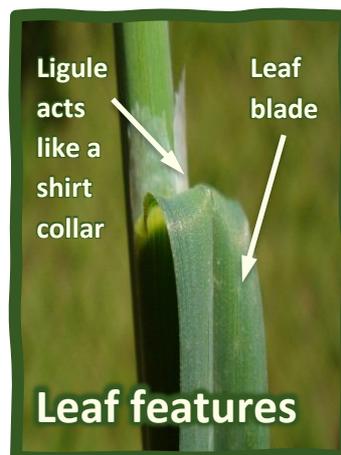
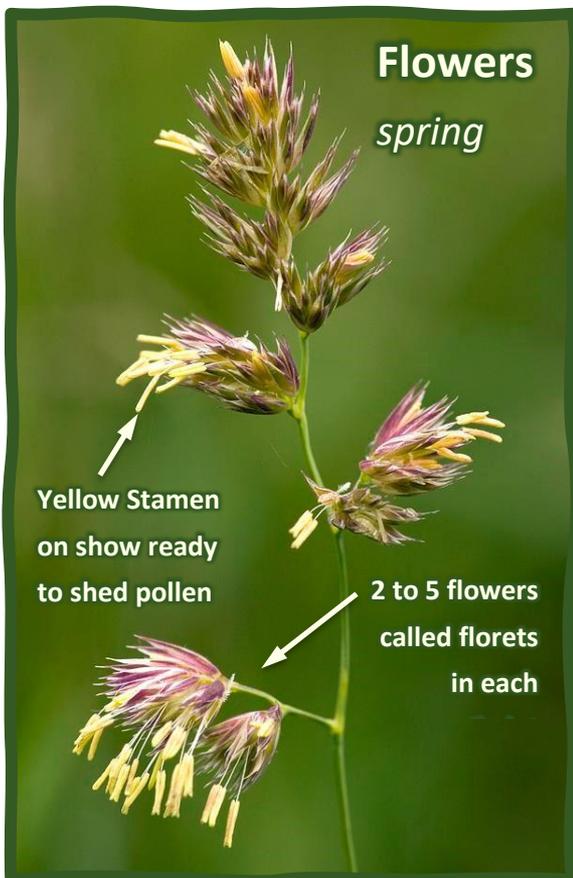
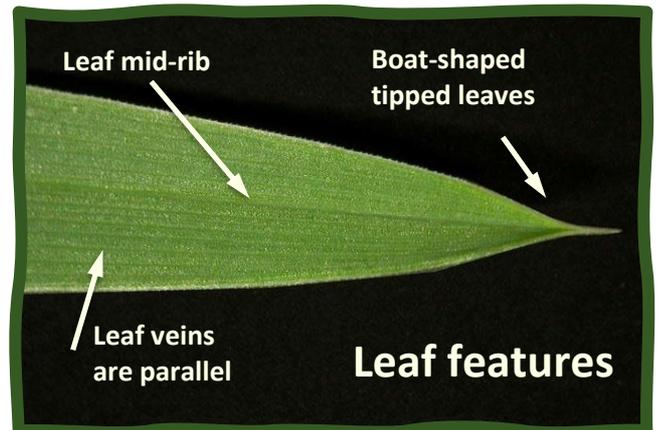


PLANT ID: cock's-foot grass

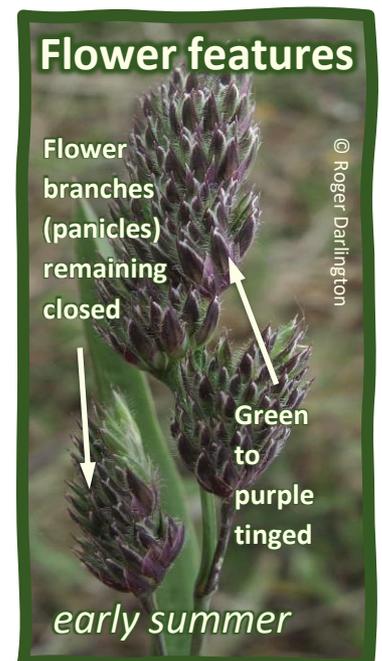
Dactylis glomerata L.



Spring - summer
Instantly recognizable by its flower panicle, which is thought to represent the shape of a cockerel's foot.



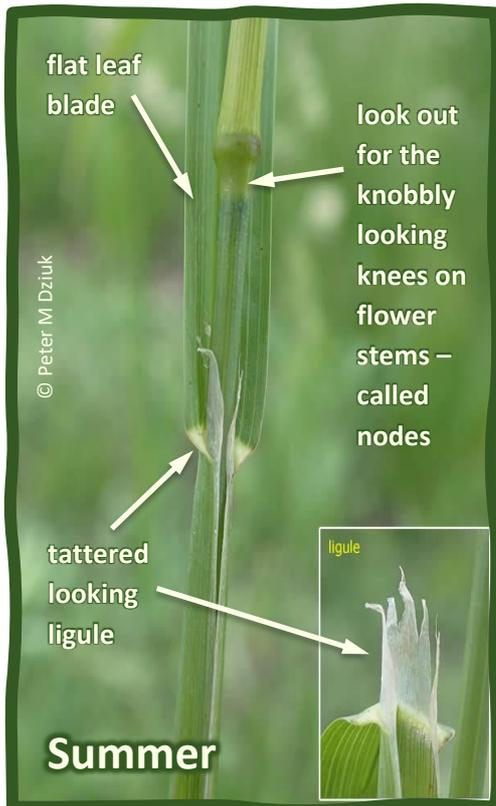
Children used to use the nuts as ammunition for their catapults



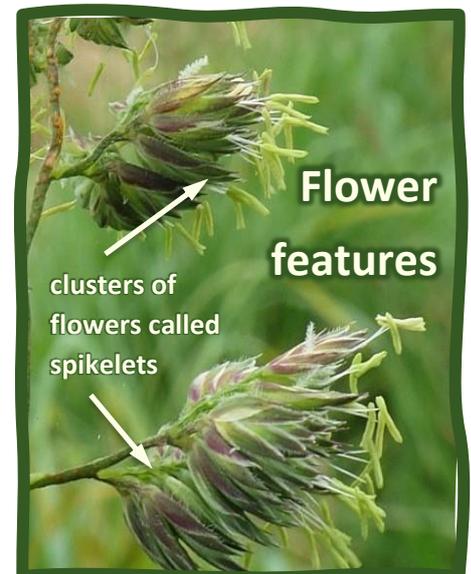
PLANT ID: cock's-foot grass *Dactylis glomerata* L.

Did you know?

The Grass family (*Poaceae*) are the most widespread, and probably the most important of the top five largest families of the Earth's flora. They grow on all continents and dominate most of the Earth's open countryside.



Allergy alert:
grass has a high pollen count !



Helpful ID tips

A hand-lens (x10), forceps and a needle will help to see and tease out the tiny individual flowers that are entombed within florets. In all grasses the leaf sheath that wraps itself around the stem as either a sealed or open sided cylinder helps give structural/mechanical strength to the growing flower stem which is called a culm.



Reproduction strategies:

- **Pollination:** pollinated by the wind
- **Vivipary:** Germination of seeds that didn't flower
- **Seed dispersal:** spread by mammals, birds

PLANT ID: cock's-foot grass

Dactylis glomerata L.

Fact File:

CURRENT STATUS: Very common.
LOCATION: Widespread across Europe and U.K.

Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

A member of the 10,000 species strong grass family (*Poaceae*). All grasses have leaf veins that are parallel and have swellings (nodes) that look like 'knobbly knees' along the flowering stem. Leaves grow from the nodes.



Flowers from May to September
Flower Structure

At the top of the **culm**, the **panicle** has at the ends of its stiff and erect branches, densely packed clusters of almost stalkless – green to purple-tinged **spikelets**. Each containing 2 to 5 **florets**, which house an individual flower in each. When the reproductive parts inside the flower are ready, two miniscule scales inside each floret begin to swell, acting like a hydraulic system that prises apart the plant, allowing the **stamen** and **stigma** to hang outwards. The plant is now ready to be fertilized.



Fruits

Fruits called grains are produced from May to October. Each grass floret produces a single grain.



Leaf

Leaf blades are green, usually hairless; up to 45cm long and sharply pointed. A jagged looking **ligule** (up to 10 mm) is found at the **leaf sheath** to leaf blade junction.



Habitat

Found in pastures and meadows, roadside verges, coastal cliffs, waste ground and open woodlands. It can form very large **tufts** in abandoned grassy sites. It tolerates any type of soil.

ALIASES

Also known as **orchard grass**, **barnyard grass**, **cockspur** and **cat grass**

What to look for



An instantly recognizable species of grass on the basis of its flower **panicle**, which at maturity, opens outwards to fancifully imitate the 'clubbed' claw of a cockerel's foot – hence its common name. When not in flower, it can easily be spotted amongst other grasses by its dense tufts of stout bluey green 'boat-shape tipped' flat leaves.

Best time to see it and use it

In summer, the flowering stems (culm) are one of the best grasses around for sucking, while the leaves are broad and strong enough to blow a tune through.

Stem

The leaf shoots are tightly packed together into a tuft. Each shoot is flattened and keeled and will also often still have old brown leaves that are degrading to leave behind thicker fibres in amongst the tufts. The flower stems can reach 140 cm high.

FOOD WEB

Seeds eaten by birds. Leaves eaten by cows, sheep and voles.

Dead leaves will decompose back into the soil.

Owls prey upon small mammals that nest within its large tufts.

IMPERSONATORS:

You will find other grasses with large leaves that grow alongside it, but don't worry - no other grass can be confused with cock's-foot because of its cockerel foot shaped flower and its flattened shoots that are held tightly together in a tuft.

The following are also wind pollinated 'grasses': wheat, barley, oats, sweetcorn, rice, bamboo.



PLANT ID: cock's-foot grass *Dactylis glomerata* L.

What's in a name? Cock's-foot grass's latin name, *glomerata* refers to its flowers being in a tight grouping at the top of its flowering stem (the culm).

Botany glossary (part 1)

Culm The rigid flowering stem of a grass

Floret A tiny flower that exists as part of a group of many other flowers collected together like the Daisy and Grass family

Leaf blade Describes the leaf of a grass

Ligule Resembles a collar that is wrapped around the stem of a grass at the point where the leaf-blade is joined

Spikelet One or more individual flowers grouped together

Stigma A stigma is a part of a flower that gets pollen from pollinators such as bees. The stigma is part of the female reproductive part of a flower

Botany glossary (part 2)

Panicle Refers to the part of the plant in which there is a distinct grouping of much branched flowers

Node A point of growth on a plant in which a leaf or bud is attached to a stem

Tuft A compact or loose cluster of grass sheath

Sheath The lower part of the leaf section that wraps itself around the grass stem.

Vein The part of the leaf that transports nutrients

Stamen male part of the flower

Pollen Fine powdery grains that the plant uses to make seeds

Grain A naked grass seed

Get up close to the cock's-foot grass by taking a virtual tour using the Pappus film library.



botanical drawings of dactylis glomerata images - Bing images

Special identification fact

The stems of all grasses are hollow. At intervals along the stem you will see a swelling called a node. It is from these nodes that the leaf sheath begins, then extends upwards as a wrapping around the culm before putting out a leaf blade to one side. At the leaf junction look out for a membranous ligule which functions like a wet suit collar to keep water out and help tension the leaf-sheath branching point

Oldest

Merchants operating along ancient trading routes, such as the 'old silk road' between Europe and the Far-East have swapped seeds and plants for 100s of years.

Global distribution

Found almost everywhere in the British Isles and across Europe.



www.GBIF.org

Global species risk of extinction (IUCN - Red Data List).

This is a very common and widespread species that has not been evaluated for any global threats to its existence.