



Inverclyde  
Renfrewshire  
East Renfrewshire  
LBAP



## SPIGNEL (*Meum athamanticum*)

Spignel is a pleasantly aromatic perennial member of the carrot family. It is characterised by its sweet, aromatic scent and finely divided leaves. In summer it produces flattish flower heads consisting of clusters of tiny, white or purplish white, flowers. The roots have sometimes been eaten as a vegetable.

### Factors Causing Loss or Decline

There is little past data on the species in order to monitor changes, but with the general decline in unimproved pasture locally, it is very likely that the species has declined. At many of its current sites it is present as small isolated populations, along steep ridges which have escaped the excesses of agricultural improvement treatments, however, Spignel can be present in large numbers at such sites. Overgrazing may be a factor at some sites, although it appears to persist in some heavily grazed pastures, and improvement is likely to be the main threat.

### Opportunities and Current Action

Spignel receives no specific action at present, although it is included within the Scarce Plants Atlas (covering all species whose present distribution comprises less than one hundred 10x10 km squares in Britain). Several of the Spignel sites are within sites identified as being Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Other populations occur within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, where local monitoring occurs.

### Action Plan

A priority is to increase awareness among landowners and users of the species' presence and vulnerability to agricultural treatments. Local populations within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park could benefit from management agreements with local landusers and the staff could carry out monitoring. Further survey work should help to locate new populations and assist the monitoring process.



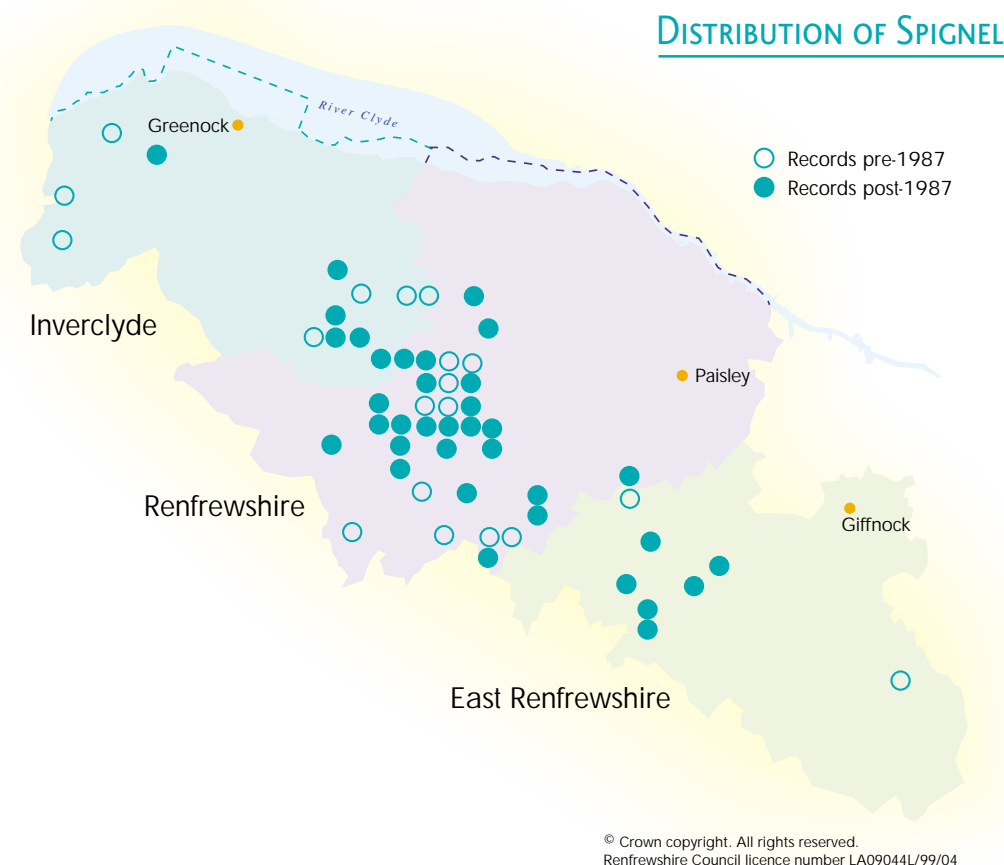
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### Current Status - UK and Local

LBAP Partnership area Status: Local Priority Species

Spignel is a local and northern species within the UK. It is found in only a few localities in northern England and Wales, but in Scotland it extends north into Argyll and Aberdeen, with large population centres in Dumfries, Perthshire and Angus.

In the LBAP Partnership area, Spignel is known from 56 one-km squares, but 16 of these are pre-1987 records. There is limited data on former distribution: Henney's *Clydesdale Flora* (1891) describes it as "not common" and quotes "hills beyond Greenock above the road to Inverkip" and "hills above the Cloch lighthouse". Lee in his *Flora of the Clyde Area* (1933) describes Spignel as a plant of hill pastures, not common, but also says "abundant on the Renfrewshire moors above Kilmacolm and Lochwinnoch".



### Ecology and Management

Spignel occurs in unimproved, upland, somewhat acidic grasslands, occasionally with dry heath. Although generally found on free draining soils, such as on steep embankments and ridges, it can also be seen along ungrazed road banks.

Local populations of Spignel are of particular interest also for the presence of *Nyssopsora echinata*, a host-specific 'rust fungus' with very distinctive, long, spiny spores that make it unique amongst British species. *N. echinata* was first found in Britain in Perthshire in 1939 and subsequent British records have all been from the same small area. However, examination of two Renfrewshire Spignel colonies in June 2001 revealed the presence of the rust at both sites. Although parasitic, the rust poses no threat to otherwise healthy plants and its presence should be considered as enhancing the conservation importance of local Spignel populations. Further investigation of the local status of *Nyssopsora* is in progress.

## Objectives and Targets

- Objective 1 Maintain the current distribution and population sizes.
- Objective 2 Introduce appropriate habitat management to encourage viable populations.
- Objective 3 Establish current distribution and population status.
- Objective 4 Consider introduction of populations at known former localities or new suitable sites.
- Objective 5 Review this plan on an annual basis, beginning in 2005.

We will achieve these objectives by:

Action	Actioned by	Timescale
Ensuring no further loss or damage to the surviving populations	SNH FWAG LAs	2004/07
Encouraging appropriate management of known sites	LAs SNH FWAG	2004/07
Surveying to locate new populations and monitoring existing populations	BSBI UoP PNHS	2004/07
Inform local landowners of presence of population	BSBI FWAG LRC	2004/07
Identifying suitable sites for potential reintroduction	BSBI CMRP GBCP PNHS UoP	2004/07
Monitoring and recording actions towards these objectives	LBAP Steering Group LBAP Officer Local Records Centre	Ongoing / annual

## Links with Other Action Plans

Unimproved Grasslands

Further Information can be obtained from The Biodiversity Officer 0141 842 5281

