

Three-cornered Leek

Creamh Tri-cheàrnach



The Three-cornered Leek is native to the Mediterranean basin around southwest Europe and northern Africa. A beautiful flower, it has been listed in the UK as a Schedule 9, non-native, invasive species. It was first recorded growing wild in 1981 with many more records from 2010 onwards and occurs in some 15 x 10km squares. It quickly spreads from gardens and local colonisation can be rapid and very bad news for native species as it completely displaces them. There are many records of large areas of bluebell woodland and rich, native habitats that have been completely smothered. The rate of colonisation is remarkable and devastating – and it seems able to occupy very diverse habitats including fields, sea cliffs and sand-dunes as well as spreading from gardens and rubbish tips along hedgerows. It has become established on Scottish islands where it is quickly becoming a concern.

It is illegal to grow, or allow this plant to grow, in the wild but it can still be bought from garden and plant catalogues – often without any warning that it is invasive and must not be allowed to escape. At the moment, it is relatively uncommon, but its unmistakable white flower, bluebell-like appearance and garlic smell means that it will become easily recognisable as it – unfortunately- becomes more prevalent

and more of a conservation problem across the country. Without determined efforts to stamp it out where it has become established, and firmly control its availability to gardeners, it will become a significant and notable aspect of the countryside. The entire plant is edible and presumably has the same medicinal effects as garlic, which has been long praised by the Gaels for its curative properties. Perhaps we have a chance of containing it...if we can eat enough of it.

*“Is leaghas air gach tinn,
Creamh is ìm a’ Mhàigh.”
Garlic with May butter,
Cures all diseases.*