

## Bastard Balm (*Melittis melissophyllum*)

**Areas and status:** A strongly SW distribution. Very local in SW Wales, SW and S England to W Sussex (a rare escape from gardens elsewhere).

**Woodland type:** Lowland Broadleaved Woodland, Scrub

**Preferred habitat niches:** Woods and hedgerows, woodland edges, scrub on base-rich soils. Coppice and clearfell. A Mediterranean species it requires sheltered conditions and warmer winter temperatures than other woodland herbs. Favours light shade and can be abundant in cleared or coppiced woodland. Likes open glades, and rides. Intolerant of grazing. An ancient woodland indicator in the east of its range (New Forest). Likes gritty well-drained soil.

### Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Over shading
- Grazing (has declined markedly in last 20 years in New Forest as a result of pony grazing)
- Can reappear after coppicing and scrub clearance
- Neglected hedge bank/ditch management



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Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Thinning	Aim to let in light, > 25-25% of canopy
Small group felling	Open up areas whilst maintaining shelter
Coppice	Short – medium rotation (< 12 years) in small coupes to maintain shelter and humidity
Manage scrub	Clear around and adjacent to existing populations
Create/maintain rides	Create/maintain rides near to existing populations
Create/maintain glades	Maintain and create glades
Protect from grazing	Seedlings are very slow to develop in the first 3 years so protection from deer and other animals may be necessary. Seasonal grazing may be necessary to control bramble if present. Late grazing after October probably best.
Protect from disturbance and trampling	Manage public access if populations likely to be disturbed
Connectivity	Seek to restore/create connectivity between woodland, hedgerows which have existing populations



■ Distribution 1987-2016 (BSBI)