

## ***Cochlearia pyrenaica* DC.**

subsp. *alpina* (Bab.) Dalby

## **Pyrenean Scurvygrass**

Native

GB: Waiting List

England: Data Deficient

GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

A biennial or perennial herb of damp ledges on base-rich cliffs, also found beside montane streams and on spoil heaps. Known in Somerset only from Cheddar Gorge, where a Scurvygrass was first recorded by Sole (Collinson, 1791) "on Cheddar [sic.] cliffs abundantly". The Cheddar Scurvygrass belongs to the taxonomically challenging *Cochlearia officinalis* group and has been recorded under various names, often treated as *C. officinalis sensu stricto*, for example by Gill *et al.* (1978), who suggested that Cheddar plants are remnant coastal populations. Rich (1991), Green *et al.* (1997), Preston *et al.* (2002) and Stace (2010), however, have all regarded Cheddar plants as *C. pyrenaica* subsp. *alpina*. The taxonomy of this group is still under revision (Tim Rich, pers comm. 2009). Although formerly abundant in Cheddar Gorge, this species has declined considerably in recent years. In their detailed "Cheddar Gorge Rare Plants Survey", FitzGerald and McDonnell (1997) found it "in a good state" particularly along the roadside and on lower ledges and slopes for about 200m of the gorge, with outliers on high cliffs. It is now restricted to cleared ledges on the Horseshoe Bend, with a few plants on the Pinnacles and nearby cliffs, but the roadside plants are gone. This is attributed to the bunds of spoil created at the base of the cliffs for public safety, which have led to the loss of the regularly disturbed roadside ground favoured by this species (Liz McDonnell, pers. comm. 2009). This taxon is found in the north of England and Wales, Western Ireland and Scotland; the Cheddar population is a southern outlier.

### **VC6**

Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST47155430	2009	HJC, FJR	Small patch of S side of gorge, behind bund
Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST47255431	2009	HJC	Over 100 plants on cliff ledges on S side of gorge
Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST47305426	2009	HJC, FJR	Small patch on E edge of The Pinnacles
Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST47345438	2009	HJC, FJR	2 plants on S side of gorge
Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST475543	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Below low cliffs
Cheddar Gorge SSSI	ST482536	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Few plants near Totty Pot



*Cochlearia pyrenaica* subsp. *alpina* at Cheddar Gorge (2009). Photo: HJC