

# Bog Plants

Blanket bog naturally contains very low levels of nutrients that plants need to survive and grow. Plants living on the bog have had to come up with special ways of surviving...

## Sphagnum Moss (*Sphagnum* sp. - Seanmhóin súsáin)

This is one of the main plants that forms blanket bog. Its leaves contain a chemical that makes the soil acidic. Many plants can't survive under very wet conditions, however sphagnum moss can absorb up to 20 times its own weight in water and still be alright. This absorbent property is why it was used as bandages in olden times. It also has this property after it dies.



Images courtesy of Ballycroy National Park/NPWS



## Reindeer Lichen (*Cladonia* sp. - Léicean réinfhia)

This grey coloured plant is mainly found in cold climates. It grows very slowly 3 - 5 mm a year and so doesn't need many nutrients. It got its name from the fact that reindeer feed on it. Also, if you look closely the individual stems look like little antlers.

## Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* - Drúchtín móna)

(Flowering July through August)

This plant has a smart way of getting nutrients. It has round reddish leaves, each covered in sticky spikes. When an insect lands on these spikes it gets stuck and the leaves curl around the insect absorbing nutrients from it.



## Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*, Fraoch mór)

(Flowering July through September)

This has pale purple flowers and is another of the main plants that form blanket bog. Its leaves also have acidic properties. It is a woody evergreen plant with leaves that are very small and scaly and closely attached to the stems so they can hold onto water. Being evergreen the plant can absorb energy from the sun year round. It is an important food source for the Red Grouse, who also use it for shelter.

## Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*, Sciollam na móna)

(Flowering July through August)

This is a very attractive plant with golden star-shaped flowers and sword-like leaves which come out from the ground. It grows in large numbers and can be very toxic to cattle if they happen to eat it. After flowering the whole plant turns orange-brown and can be seen until late autumn.



Text by Robert O'Dwyer, Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo. Images courtesy of Ballycroy National Park/NPWS

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