

### What to look for around the pond

Greater Spearwort has long, thin leaves like spear blades but reveals itself as a buttercup by its shiny yellow flowers.

Yellow iris looks impressive enough to be a garden plant but is a bona fide English wild flower.

The Common Reed *Phragmites* is a giant grass with beautiful feathery plumes of flowers.



Common reed.  
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Dragonflies and damselflies hawk around the pond in the Summer. Dragonflies are big, solid strong fliers. Damselflies are smaller and more delicate.



Broad bodied chaser dragonfly

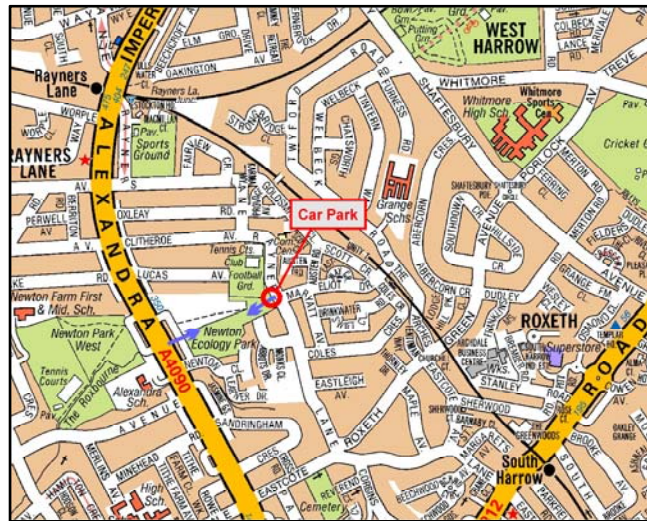
### How to find the reserve

Newton Farm Ecology Park is situated south of Rayner's Lane station between Alexandra Avenue and Rayner's Lane. The post code is HA2 9DA.

The western entrance is a little difficult to find: it is on a service road running parallel with Alexandra Avenue and separated from the main road by a wall. Don't get confused by a sign for the Newton Park Allotments: the entrance to the Ecology Park is 100 yards south of the entrance to the allotments.

The eastern entrance, on Rayner's Lane, is more obvious and has a small car park. This is the meeting point for all walks and working parties.

Bus H12 runs along Rayner's Lane while bus 398 runs along Alexandra Avenue.



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# Newton Farm Ecology Park

Find out more about your local nature reserve



Leaflet produced by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum February 2012

Newton Farm Ecology Park is a small reserve of 2.6 hectares in the south of Harrow, located between Alexandra Avenue and Rayner's Lane. Although small, it contains a mixture of habitats including a pond, hedges and grassy meadows.

Newton Farm lies on the London Clay that underlies much of southern Harrow. The site itself was originally a flood plain at the confluence of the Roxbourne and the east arm of the Yeading Brook. It has a long history of use as an industrial site. In some areas the subsoil contains lots of broken pottery; in others it comprises road building aggregates that the Council stored here. In 1990 the area was converted to a nature reserve and local open space. It was then that the line of white willows was planted, together with many of the trees that now form the wooded areas in the eastern half of the site.

In 2000 a healing garden was created by an independent community group funded by Harrow Council and the Harrow Heritage Trust, but soon fell into disrepair. It is still maintained as a discrete space, and many of the planted herbs, used of old as medicines, remain including fennel and comfrey.

In 2010 it came under the umbrella of the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum. Volunteers from the Forum carry out day to day small scale maintenance while Council contractors carry out large scale work, in particular mowing the meadow areas. Our management aims are to reduce rank vegetation such as creeping thistle and horseradish and improve the species mix in the grassland area.

**Points to note**

In very early spring (February onward) a hedge of blackthorn along the northern edge of the wet meadow bears attractive white blossom on bare branches. Later the small plums called sloes form. These are very bitter but are often steeped in gin to flavour the spirit.

For a short period in late May or early June the site is made lovely by the blossoms of dog rose which clammers over many of the fences and hedges.

As befits the origin of the site as a flood plain, willows are prominent on the site. A fine row of white willows (*Salix alba*) runs north-south across the site. The osiers (*Salix viminalis*) beside the Yeading Brook East have been coppiced but even if left alone will never grow higher than six metres.

**What to look out for in the meadow** Members of the pea family can be recognized by their familiar flowers, with a landing platform for bees and their pods like smaller versions of domestic pea pods. Most have tendrils to cling to other plants. The yellow birdsfoot trefoil and blue Common Vetch are widespread, but other rarer species are present as well.



Bird's foot trefoil



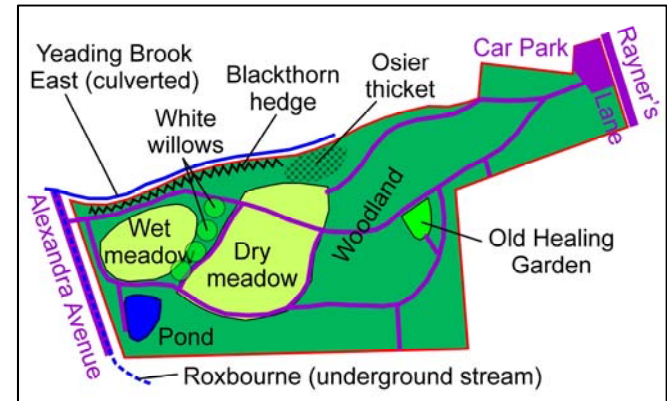
Cinquefoil. Image by Hans Hillewaert, licenced by Creative Commons

Members of the buttercup family have pretty yellow flowers, but so do many members of the rose family such as cinquefoil. Cinquefoil (French for "five leaves") (*Potentilla reptans*) has leaves comprising five leaflets joined at the centre.



Cow parsley. Image by Rasbak, licenced by Creative Commons

Carrot and its relatives have sprays ("umbels") of small white flowers. Cow parsley is the most common here, but there are other species present including fennel in the Old Healing Garden, which breaks the rule and has yellow flowers.



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Newton Farm Ecology Park needs volunteers. If you would like to help, whether at one of our working parties or as part of the warden team, contact the warden or Harrow Nature Conservation Forum.