

# Montbretia

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## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora*

**Hybrid of:** *Crocosmia aurea* x *Crocosmia pottsii*

**AKA:** Coppertips, Falling Stars

**Native to:** Hybrid, parent species from South Africa

**Habitat:** Hedgerows, road verges, banks of lakes and rivers, beside woods and waste land, widely grown in gardens.

*Crocosmia* species are easily recognised when in flower by the distinct shape and colour of their flower heads, all are non-native. The hybrid montbretia, with relatively short stems and orange flowers, has established in the wild and is considered an invasive non-native species. A number of other ornamental *Crocosmia* species are grown in gardens and other landscaped areas. When not in flower, *Crocosmia* species are more difficult to identify. Look for rusty brown dead leaves and remains of previous years flowering heads.

Montbretia was originally created in France from parent plants of South African origin. Introduced to Northern Ireland and as a garden plant and has spread rapidly both naturally and through the disposal of garden waste. Can completely dominate habitat where it grows, sometimes excluding native plant species. Spreads mainly by rhizomes, rarely by seed.



## Key ID Features



Flowers orange  
and tubular in  
nodding clusters

Long stamens

Corm: a bulblike organ that  
provides the plant with energy



Grows to 60cm tall, usually found in clusters  
on road verges and in hedgerows.

Leaves less than 3cm wide, upright, flat,  
spear shaped and bright green

Flowers borne on long spikes



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI/>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>



# Identification throughout the year

Montbretia is easily distinguished from other species when it is in flower between July and September. Identification outside of this period is more difficult. A key feature is the dense stands that it forms, which can spread to cover large areas. In addition, its smooth, upright, green leaves are relatively characteristic (although these can be confused with iris species). Green leaves are usually present from spring to autumn; dead brown leaves, dead flowering stems and seed heads are present throughout winter. Identification can also be checked year round by digging up the plant's corm.



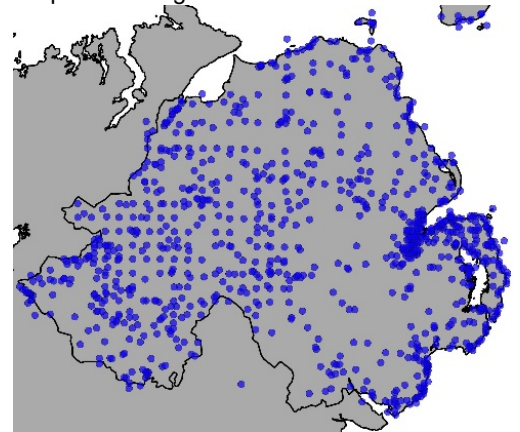
Seed head



Dense stands present over winter

## Distribution

Widespread throughout Northern Ireland.



Source: NBN Atlas Northern Ireland – available at <https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0001754398>  
Check website for current distribution

## Similar Species

### Iris species

Native  
(various species – example shown is stinking iris)



Iris flowers are distinctly different from montbretia



Other *Crocosmia* species are rarely found outside of the landscaped environment and rarely behave in an invasive manner. *Crocosmia* species in the wild that are invasive are most likely to be montbretia.

Flowers often different colour (this variety is a vivid red and taller than montbretia)

When not in flower iris (pictured) can be confused with montbretia



Similar shaped upright leaves with brown die



Seed heads of iris differ from those of montbretia

### References and further reading:

Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) *"The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora."* A & C Black  
Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) *"New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora"*. Oxford University Press  
Stace, C (1999) *"Field Flora of the British Isles"*. Cambridge University Press  
Photos from: Olaf Booy, Joanne Denyer, Sue Hocking (Cornwall Wildlife Trust), Peter Llewellyn, Max Wade, Vicky White

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