

A HYBRID THISTLE FROM WILTSHIRE

By J. D. GROSE.

× *CIRSIUM SEMIDECURRENS* Richter 1830: Klett & Richter, *Fl. Leipzig*, 673. *Cirsium palustre* (L.) Scop. × *C. tuberosum* (L.) All.

This hybrid was first found in Britain at Nash Point, Glamorgan, and briefly recorded by Mr J. S. L. Gilmour (1933: *J. Bot.*, 71, 17). Constant search has been made for it in Wiltshire during the last ten years, and in July 1947 a small colony was discovered at Great Ridge, S. Wilts. (v.-c. 8), whence *C. tuberosum* was first recorded for Britain by Lambert in 1812. The locality is the northern slope of an open chalk pasture, alt. c. 600 feet. In addition to the common downland species, the following plants were associated: *Serratula tinctoria*, *Succisa pratensis* and a very little *Genista tinctoria*. More remarkable was the occurrence of *Trifolium medium*, *Hypericum hirsutum* and *H. pulchrum*, all in very small quantities. The presence of the two last on an exposed chalk down, totally devoid of any shelter, must be almost unique. It may indicate that this ground was once woodland, and it is worth recalling that the early notices of *C. tuberosum* describe the locality as "Great Ridge Wood."

Six flowering stems of × *C. semidecurrens* were seen, and I append a description of the specimen gathered:

Stem c. 60 cm. high, erect, unbranched, grooved, purplish from above to near the base, very slightly *spinous-winged* in two places near the centre (this character was absent in the other five stems), clothed with sparse arachnoid pubescence and many jointed hairs below and with dense arachnoid pubescence and scattered jointed hairs above. Radical leaves petiolate, c. 14 × 6 cm., oblong-lanceolate, pinnatifid with pinnatifid segments, softly spinous-margined with yellow spines, both surfaces with scattered jointed hairs. Cauline leaves similar but smaller, to 2.5 cm. and *strongly decurrent*. Capitula 4, racemose, on densely-felted peduncles 1.5 cm. long. Pericline globular, arachnoid. Phyllaries appressed, spinous-tipped, middle ones with glandular dorsal nerves. Inner phyllaries similar but purplish. Florets purple, darker in colour than those of *C. tuberosum*. Limb of corolla exceeding tube. Achenes abortive, shrivelled.

In appearance the plant is a good intermediate between the parents. The purple coloration, short peduncles, glandular, attenuate phyllaries, decurrent petioles and the rudiments of a spinous wing on the stem show the influence of *C. palustre*, while the arachnoid pubescence of the unbranched stem and the armature of the broad, divided radical leaves are evidence of *C. tuberosum*. The floral dimensions of the tube/limb ratio are just intermediate.

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