

## Slender Tare *Ervum gracile* (*Vicia parviflora*) in Worcestershire.

Gary Farmer

In July 2019 Harry Green alerted me to the presence of Slender Tare *Ervum gracile* (previously *Vicia parviflora*) (Stace 2019) at a site that I manage for Vale Landscape Heritage Trust (VLHT) in North Littleton. This is a nationally scarce plant found on sticky calcareous clay soils which are frequently wet in winter but baked dry in summer (BRC Plant Atlas). The site in question has many other species of legumes growing so Slender Tare would have been easy to overlook.

*Ervum gracile* has been considered very rare in the Worcestershire since its first discovery in the county in 1867 when it was known as *Vicia gracilis* (Amphlett & Rea 1909). It has declined noticeably across its British range in recent years, possibly due to modern farming practices, as is the case in the Netherlands and Germany (BRC Plant Atlas). In Worcestershire it has declined and was only known from a 20 metre stretch along the foot of Bishampton Bank (Maskew 2014).



01. Slender Tare *Vicia parviflora*. Hipton Hill Orchards 27.06.21. Gary Farmer.

*Ervum gracile* is a scrambling annual with racemes of usually one to four pale bluish-purple flowers, that are six to nine millimetres in length (01 & 02), somewhat larger than those of Hairy Tare and Smooth Tare. The pods of *E. gracile* (03) are 12 to 17mm long, usually containing four to six seeds, and their tendrils (04) are simple (Stace 2019).

Once I was aware of the species' rarity, identity and preferred habitat type I considered which other VLHT sites this little pea might be hiding on. The most obvious choice was Hipton Hill Orchards near Lenchwick so in June 2021 I searched amongst the abundant legumes and eventually found several plants (at SP027480) of what I believed to be Slender Tare. I forwarded photos to Brett Westwood and John Day and they both agreed that this was indeed Slender Tare (*V. parviflora*) *E. gracile*. This species had also been found on adjacent land in Sheriffs Lench in 2019 (Harry Green *pers comm.*).



02. Slender Tare *Ervum gracile* flowers. Hipton Hill Orchards 27.06.21. Gary Farmer.



03. Slender Tare *Ervum gracile* seed pods. Hipton Hill Orchards 27.06.21. Gary Farmer.



04. Slender Tare *Ervum gracile* tendril. Hipton Hill Orchards 27.06.21. Gary Farmer.

### References

- Amphlett, J. & Rea, C. 1909. *The Botany of Worcestershire*. (Reprinted 1978). EP Publishing Ltd. Wakefield.  
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### Images

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