

# Take a closer look at... LICHENS

Easy to overlook, lichens are made up of two tiny living things: a fungus and an alga or cyanobacteria. They help each other out – the alga or cyanobacteria produces food, and the fungus gathers water and protects the alga. This type of relationship is called symbiosis.

Take a look at rocks and trees in your area - lichens can be leafy, crusty or with tiny branches. They can survive in the world's harshest places - the Arctic, in deserts and on mountain tops - where most plants cannot survive!

- There are over 1800 species of lichen recorded in Great Britain - compared with 598 species of breeding birds!
- Some Arctic lichens are over 4000 years old - some of the oldest living things on Earth.
- Lichens are very sensitive to air pollution and are used by scientists to monitor air quality.
- The branch-like lichens are used in model railways a material for making miniature trees and shrubs!
- Lichens have been used in making dyes, perfumes and in traditional medicines - and even porridge!

Visit the **British Lichen Society** to see the beauty of lichens and the **Council's website** for more on **Carmarthenshire's amazing wildlife.**



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