

Species of the week

Black or White

By Moira



A very strange question but one which I found very difficult to answer when out on my walks around Notton/Woolley. At this time of year, I love all the colours, as we all do, but especially the berries lighting up the hedgerows.

One of my favourites is Bryony and yes, you've guessed it, one is called white bryony and the other black bryony and they are completely different species. The black bryony is from the yam family and the white bryony is from the cucumber family.

I took some pictures on my phone but still found it hard to distinguish between the two.

Both grow from tubers, are prolific climbers and produce beautiful red berries in autumn both in streamers and clusters. These berries are poisonous.

One of the things that tell them apart are the leaves. The leaves of the black bryony are dark green and glossy shaped, as Harrap describes in his flower book. like the Ace of spades. These were still evident. The leaves of the white bryony are a completely different shape but had all crumpled and died.

They often grow together in the hedgerows so I had to do more research and found that the white bryony had tendrils and the black did not. When I looked at my photos, I saw the tendrils. So that was the final piece of the puzzle!

Although the books don't make it clear, looking at my photo it would seem that the black bryony berries are a much glossier red and grow more in clusters and the white bryony in long streamers. So now you know what you are looking for, next time you're out see if you can spot some.

Conclusions

* Wait until the spring when I will be able to recognise the leaves and the flowers.

* In these horrendous times we are all battling through, just enjoy the jewels in the hedgerows and as my Mum used to say "enjoy all the little pockets of happiness".

Black or White? Who really cares!

Miss you all and hope to see you soon. Stay safe

Moira x

Photos by Moira Beaumont