

A Guide to Garden Dragonflies in April and May in Scotland



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The following species are the most likely to be seen in a garden in the early part of the year. What you see will depend on whether you have a pond or whether you live near a loch, river or stream. You may be fortunate enough to see other species and if you do see something different then the BDS website provides information on all species that have occurred in the British Isles.

Damselflies

Damselflies are smaller and more delicate than dragonflies.

They rest with wings folded over their bodies and have eyes separated on either side of their head.

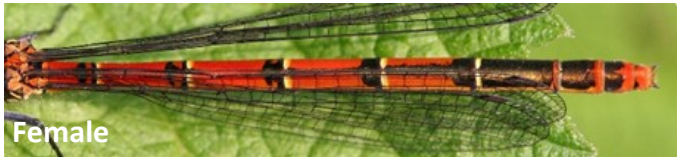
Male



Large Red Damselfly

This is a distinctive species and the only red damselfly likely to be found in a garden.

It is the largest of the damselflies with the female having more black markings than the male.



Female

Blue-tailed Damselfly

This is a common species which stands out as having a blue segment at the end of its otherwise dark coloured abdomen.

The thorax is blue in the male.

The female occurs in a number of different colour forms in which the thorax may be blue, green, brown or pink with one form having a brown segment at the end of the abdomen rather than the usual blue.

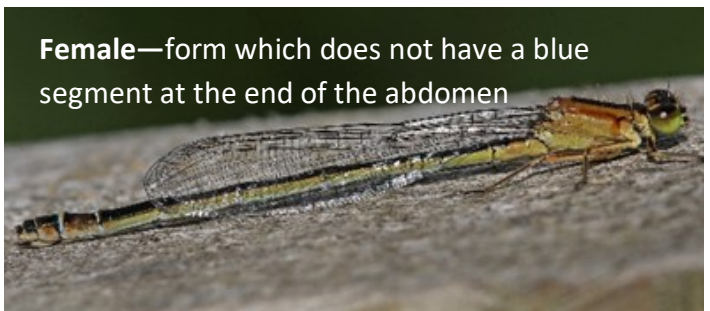
Female – the brightest colour form



Male – one form of female looks similar



Female – form which does not have a blue segment at the end of the abdomen



Male



Azure Damselfly

This is the most frequent of the blue damselflies to be found in a garden. Immature males tend to have whitish markings in place of the blue, particularly on the thorax.

The identification of the males depends on the black mark at the top of the abdomen, which is a "U" shaped mark in this species as illustrated.

Females are easier to distinguish from Common Blue Damselfly which is the other blue damselfly likely to occur in a garden. See the picture below.

There is a form of the female which has blue markings.

Azure Damselflies are currently found south of a line from Oban – Pitlochry – Aberdeen but are steadily making their way northwards.

Female



Common Blue Damselfly

This lives up to its name; it is common and can be found in very large numbers but generally at larger lochs than a typical garden pond. However, they do occur at garden ponds and may visit a garden from a larger waterbody nearby.

The mark at the top of the abdomen in the male is a round dot joined to the black line at the end of the segment

The female is normally duller but there is a much more distinctive blue form.

Male



Female



Dragonflies

Dragonflies are larger than damselflies and stronger fliers.

They rest with their wings spread out from their bodies and their eyes meet at the centre line of their heads.

The three species most likely to be seen in gardens in spring are illustrated, but being stronger fliers, dragonflies wander further and other species might be seen at a location some way from their normal habitat.

Four-spotted Chaser

This species gets its name from the dark markings on the leading edge of its wings. The male and the female look very similar. In contrast to the Broad-bodied Chaser this species is not very territorial and several may be seen together at a larger pond. It does look superficially similar to female Broad-bodied Chaser but the four wing spots distinguish it.



If you have a pond then it is worth keeping an eye open for exuviae on vegetation around the pond. These are the external skeleton of the larvae which is left behind after the larvae has crawled out of the water and the adult emerged. Damselfly exuvia are smaller and slimmer than typical dragonfly larvae.



British Dragonfly Society is working to increase public understanding and awareness of dragonflies, their conservation and the challenges they face, in order to increase action for dragonflies across Britain.

www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

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