

A Guide to Garden Dragonflies in April and May



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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.

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.

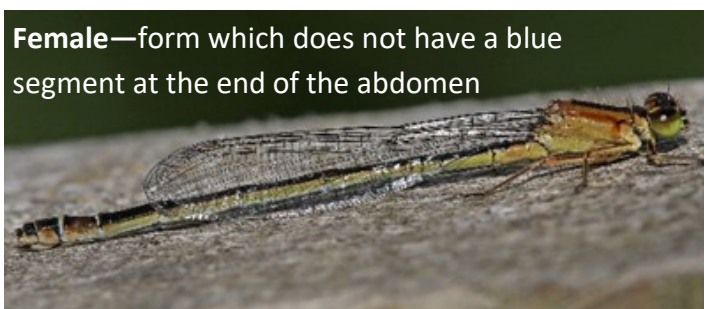
Female – the brightest colour form



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.

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 lakes than a typical garden pond. However, they do occur at garden ponds and may visit a garden from a larger lake 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



Banded Demoiselle

You are only likely to see this species if you are lucky enough to have a stream or river at the bottom of your garden.

The male has a distinctive blue band on its wing.

The female has wings which are coloured green all over.



Male

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.



Female

Male



Broad-bodied Chaser

This is a distinctive species with a short broad body which is blue in the male and brown with yellow patches at the sides in the female.

The male has a rapid flight and tends to adopt a favoured perch at the edge of a pond to which he will return after chasing off a rival or "courting" a female.

The female is more likely to be seen hanging on a tree or shrub a little way from the water, but if seen flying its colouration and mode of flight is reminiscent of a Hornet.

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.



Emperor Dragonfly

This is our largest dragonfly and one of the largest insects found in Britain. Males are a bright blue and difficult to confuse with any other species. It generally prefers larger ponds and other water bodies but often visits gardens to investigate smaller ponds. It is highly territorial and will constantly patrol a pond and chase away not just rival males but also other species of dragonfly. The female is green and will generally only visit a pond to lay eggs. She will land on floating vegetation and lower the tip of her abdomen into the water to insert her eggs before moving to another suitable piece of vegetation.

Female



Damselfly
exuvia



Emperor
Dragonfly
exuvia

Male



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.

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