

Parietaria or pellitory of the wall

Botanical information:

Family: URTICACEAE. This family comprises several genera, the most important of which are *Urtica* and *Parietaria*. In this sheet, we describe *Parietaria*, which contains allergenic pollen.

Parietaria is a herb that grows to a height of between 10 and 80 cm, is highly branched, and lives for several years (perennial). The stems are often reddish in colour, and along the stems are the dark green leaves and the flowers, which are very small and grouped in glomeruli in the leaf axils. The fruit is very small and difficult to see. Stems and leaves are covered with small, soft hairs (pubescent). These hairs, unlike those of the nettle, do not sting.

It grows on walls and rocks and in areas with very little soil. It also grows on disturbed soil near where people and animals pass and on abandoned land and plots (in both urban and rural areas).



Fig. 1. Overview of a parietaria plant growing on a wall, and branches with flowers and leaves. In the middle picture below you can see the stamens (where pollen is produced) exposed to the outside.

Scientific name (species): *Parietaria judaica*, *P. officinalis*, *P. mauritanica*, *P. lusitanica*, *P. diffusa* entre otros

Common names:

English: parietaria, spreading pellitory, pellitory of the wall, upright pellitory, lichwort

Català: parietària, morella roquera, herba de paret, herba de mur, herba de cargol

Castellano: parietaria, hierba de muro, hierba caracolera, albahaquilla, pelosilla

Euskera: orma-belarr, odar, zigu, muru-belarr, andredena

Galego: pulitaria

Other important species from the same family: nettles such as *Urtica urens*, *U. pilulifera*, *U. dioica* and plants from extremely dry places such as *Forsskaolea tenacissima*.

Aerobiological information:

Parietaria pollen cannot be distinguished from nettle pollen by its shape (only one exception, *Urtica membranacea*) and therefore, in studies of pollen levels in the air, it is more correct to speak of urticaria pollen than of parietaria pollen. On the other hand, they do behave differently in terms of provoking allergy, as nettle pollen does not provoke a reaction. It is known that in urban and urbanised environments, parietaria pollen is more frequent than nettle pollen and that in rural and mountain areas nettle pollen is more frequent.

Urticaria pollen is present in the air, in many cases, throughout the year, but levels are usually problematic from early spring to late summer, with little variation depending on the geographical area.

The pollen calendar is shown below, with information on the distribution of this type of pollen throughout the year at each of the stations of the Aerobiological Network of Catalonia (*Xarxa Aerobiològica de Catalunya, XAC*). For more information consult: <https://aerobiologia.cat>

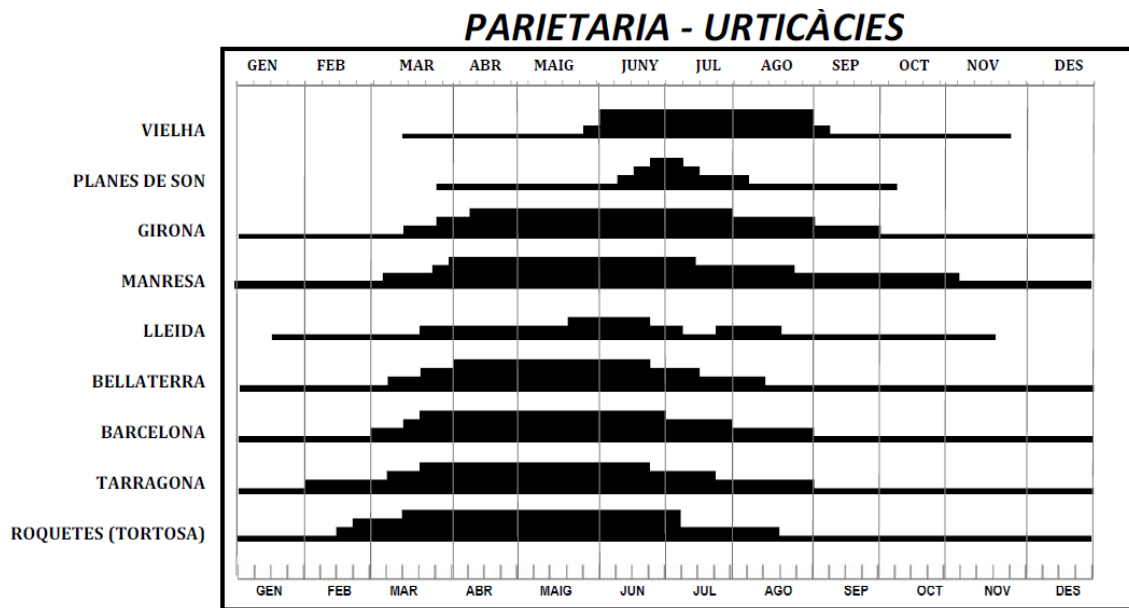


Fig. 2. Comparative dynamics of Urticaceae pollen levels in Catalonia and allergy risk.

Levels	Concentrations	Allergies
1. Low	Little important	Rare
2. Medium	Medium	Possible risk
3. High	Very high	Important risk
4. Very high	Maximal	Maximal risks

Remark: Near flowering plants, levels may be higher than indicated.

Medical information:

Parietaria pollen is highly allergenic, being among the most important on the Mediterranean coast and becoming less important as we move inland.

Numerous studies have been carried out to check the different allergenic capacities of parietaria and nettle pollen, always with the result that nettles do not have this capacity.

Tips for people with allergy to parietaria pollen

- Be aware of (with a medical diagnosis) which pollen is causing the allergy.
- Keep yourself informed of the levels of allergenic pollen in your usual area and inform yourself of the levels in the areas where you plan to go. It is advisable to adapt voluntary trips (weekends, vacations...) to areas where the allergen that affects us is not present. The website <https://aerobiologia.cat> shows updated information on pollen levels in Catalonia and explains how to access information from other geographical areas. You can sign up (and unsubscribe) to receive the weekly newsletter at: <https://aerobiologia.cat/pia/en/subscribe#newsletter>
- If you notice "problems" outside the usual season, consult your allergist to see if sensitization to other allergens has occurred.
- Learn to recognize the pollen-producing plant that causes allergy and, above all, what its flower looks like, from the moment it begins to form and while it is releasing pollen.
- Have the plant that causes allergy located in the usual environment (home, school, work...) and avoid approaching it as much as possible when we see it starts to have open flowers and until the end of flowering.
- During the pollination season,
 - if you are outdoors, protect your eyes with dark circles and your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or a mask to help filter the air.
 - if you go by car, travel with the windows closed and with an anti-pollen filter; if you go by motorcycle or bicycle, follow the previous advice.
 - change your clothes when you get home and wash them before using them again.
 - dry your clothes indoors to avoid retaining the allergen that affects you.
 - wash your hair or avoid contact with the pillow when you go to sleep, as it will retain the particles that were in the air.
 - ventilate the rooms for 5-10 minutes, if possible before it gets light or early in the morning, because normally in this time slot there will be little pollen in the air.
 - wash fresh vegetables before eating them, as they may carry pollen grains.
 - be very careful on windy, dry and sunny days, as they tend to have higher pollen concentrations.
 - the central hours of the day are usually those with the highest pollen concentrations.
 - having a cold, environmental pollution, physical efforts, the presence of perfumes, tobacco, insecticides, lacquers... can aggravate the symptoms.