

COMPOSITE FLOWERS

P.E. Horn

(N.B. The illustrations on the adjoining page should help in explaining these notes and vice versa).

The 'composite flower' is an inflorescence consisting of many individual flowers.

The flowers in these inflorescences are of two types:

1. Ligulate or ray florets
2. Tubular or disc florets.

In both cases the individual flowers each consist of 5 petals, 5 stamens and an ovary: the calyx may be present either in the form of a pappus (hair like structures which act as a parachute in wind dispersal of the seed) or as inconspicuous, minute scales.

The composite inflorescence (capitulum) may consist:

1. entirely of ray flowers [e.g. Taraxacum officinale (dandelion), Crepis capillaris (hawksbeard)]
- or 2. entirely of disc florets [e.g. Cirsium arvense (Californian thistle), C. vulgare (Scotch thistle)],
- or 3. a mixture of disc and ray florets [e.g. Bellis perennis (daisy), Matricaria inodora (scentless chamomile)].

Each inflorescence is protected by a series of 'sepal-like' bracts, the phyllaries, collectively called the involucre.

