

let's get buzzing in Buriton



Buriton has been selected as one of only six parishes in Hampshire for an important wildlife project – and lots of people began to get involved at the recent Village Show.

There were scores of fantastic entries in the horticultural and craft sections – and some amazing artwork by children from the village school promoting the message “Save the Pollinators”.

Stalls on the recreation ground with information about bees, butterflies and other vital creatures were very popular – and the wildlife safaris in the long grass proved how useful this change of habitat can be.

The detailed maps of the parish also attracted lots of interest and, by the end of the Show, there were plenty of red and green blobs showing individual gardens and areas of communal open spaces that might be able to provide more help for pollinators.

People also used the maps to suggest potential ‘corridors’ that might help creatures travel between larger habitat spaces.

These maps could help to identify a network of sites as stepping stones through the village offering food, shelter and safety for bees, birds, bats and other types of wildlife.

Experts explain that it is not just big animals like elephants, rhinos and tigers that are under threat: lots of insect species are also declining – and many of these small creatures are vital to our lives.

Bees, butterflies, moths and beetles are vital for crops and fruit – with estimates suggesting that over a third of the food that we eat depends on such unsung little pollinators.

Pollinators collect pollen and nectar from flowers and, when they move from one to another, they fertilise the plants in the process so they can produce their seeds and fruit. Some creatures collect pollen deliberately, like many bees, whilst others move pollen accidentally like butterflies.

But lots of these creatures are now struggling because of the loss of habitats and use of pesticides.

England has lost an estimated 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows since the Second World War.

This rampant loss has had a catastrophic effect on butterflies, hoverflies and bees, with numbers of some species estimated to have fallen by 80 per cent in recent years.

They need all the help we can give them.

So, what's next?

Following the Parish Council's appeal for volunteers to develop ideas and actions, a group is gradually forming with a valuable mix of expertise, dedication and enthusiasm.

The pollinator project offers the potential to involve gardens throughout the parish, the village school, St Mary's church, local farmers and roadside verges as well as Parish Council land and the existing Nature Reserves. Each part of the village might wish to think about how their area could help.

It may be possible to plant some more native trees or shrubs, to build bug hotels, to reduce grass mowing and to increase areas of wildflowers. Simply mowing some parts of grassed areas less frequently and thinking carefully about when not to cut vegetation back can probably help to create corridors for wildlife to connect to the wider countryside.

And everyone can get a buzz out of wildlife-friendly gardening!

Would you be willing to join the group or help in any way – or suggest activities to help maintain the momentum of the project? If so, simply contact Petra Norris, Parish Clerk, via 07943 536065 or buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk

There have been many positive comments about the long grass on the recreation ground. But it has to be cut at least once a year (or else wildflowers suffer) and all the cuttings have to be raked away (or they alter the soil

and encourage species which defeat wildflowers).

There are plans to cut in September and for a 'Community Hay-Day' soon afterwards when everyone can bring rakes and wheelbarrows to help. More details soon.

And the County and District Councils are considering if they can adjust the mowing of roadside verges to be more helpful to wildflowers and pollinators.

But we can all help in our gardens as well – and there are tips and ideas on these pages.

Autumn and winter are times to plan gardens for next year, plant bulbs to burst forth in the spring, leave flowers to turn to seeds so that birds can feed and leave ivy until after flowering as it is a top food at this time of year.

Please use the new 'Buriton Pollinators' Facebook and Instagram sites to share your ideas, show pictures and learn from others.



Plan our gardens for next year

Gardening for wildlife doesn't need to spoil our garden styles or tastes. A garden doesn't need to be a miniature nature reserve or become weed-strewn and wild to be brilliant for nature.

Nor is it only about setting aside a little corner. It's quite possible to do things throughout our gardens that help wildlife without compromising everything else we want our gardens to be.

Wildlife needs food, water, shelter and places to breed. By providing these things we'll ensure our gardens are alive.

Pollinators love plants which are rich in nectar and pollen. Nectar contains sugar for energy, while pollen contains protein.

Many ornamental garden plants, such as pansies and begonias, are of no value to wildlife. Years of cultivation for showy blooms mean that these colourful flowers often produce little pollen or nectar. Our money could be better spent elsewhere.

There are hundreds of beautiful flowers that do provide these resources – and we can all use the next few months to plan what we'll grow in our gardens next year.

Pollinators also have different habitat needs at different times of year. We can help by thinking about our gardens through the seasons.

The following plants would give nourishment to pollinators almost all year round. Most are suitable for many gardens and can be left alone once planted:

–Spring: crocuses, lungwort, primroses, heathers, marjoram

–Summer: comfrey, vipers bugloss,



lavender, ox-eye daisy, foxgloves, phacelia, thyme

–Autumn / winter: red valerian, mahonia, ivy, hebe, yarrow, honeysuckle, snowdrops.

As well as swapping bedding plants with pollinator friendly plants, there are also ways of letting parts of our lawns grow long whilst still showing that we have standards. One easy way is just to leave some blocks of grass unmown until autumn. Less mowing means more native wildflowers which means more pollinators. Some oxeye daisies or other flowers might appear – and grasshoppers, beetles, hoverflies and other creatures will be delighted.

British gardens cover more than a million acres and can be a lifeline for pollinators. There can be more pollinators in all our gardens than in surrounding agricultural land – but there's also room for more.

No matter what size your garden is, you can help save the sound of summer by providing friendly flowers and plants.

Being a parish that cherishes its wildlife and its hedgerows would be a fantastic legacy to leave to future generations.

Things to help nature in our gardens:

1. Choose a variety of proven pollinator plants to provide food all year round (look for the RHS logo)
2. Pollinators need water too – preferably rainwater (even just a dish with some stones)
3. Let some long grass grow for wildflowers – and consider mowing less often
4. Grow some ivy or other climbers
5. Through winter: leave perennial plants uncut and leave some seed heads and berries
6. Don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots.
7. Build a bug hotel: this is a great way to help many important species
8. Create a small, shady wood pile for bugs to shelter, nest and feed
9. Allow hedgehogs and others to pass through – native hedges are better than fences (or cut a tunnel!)
10. Almost all pesticides can harm pollinators – avoid using them and never spray open flowers
11. Don't feel that your space is too small – any size or shape can help
12. Explain your plans to your neighbours – they might follow your lead.

If everyone did just some of these things we would probably find lots of bees, butterflies, hoverflies and beetles would be very grateful.

