

let's get buzzing in Buriton



Melanie Oxley is a local ecologist who has helped Buriton's Pollinator and Nature work in a number of ways – including running the successful 'Wildlife Safaris' at last year's Village Show.

Here she provides some thoughts and advice about how we can all adjust our gardens, often in relatively small ways, to help nature ...

Because of the devastating losses of species and habitats in the wider countryside, our private gardens and public open spaces have become a really important refuge for biodiversity.

There are around 20 million gardens in the country which, with allotments and public open spaces, cover almost a third of our land.

Our gardens can provide a real help to nature and – with some relatively small changes – we can create networks through our gardens and increase the area available to wildlife in all its forms.

And it helps if we provide a range of plants with flowering times through the seasons so that pollinators can survive and thrive.

Where should we start?

Nothing is more precious than our soil. Without a rich, organic, healthy, functioning soil, we are in deep trouble. Making your own compost, adding leaf-

litter and chipped bark, all enrich the soil by attracting invertebrates who come and do all the work of breaking down plant and fungus matter into humus.

Worms – our workhorses

Earthworms are the sign of a healthy soil, providing an open tilth which allows oxygen to circulate and ensuring that soil can absorb water. Moles, frogs & toads, hedgehogs, foxes and song-birds all feed on earthworms.

Ideas to add wildlife value to your garden

- a nettle & comfrey patch or trough
- climbers, including ivy & honeysuckle
- native wild flowers in borders and lawns – let them seed
- berry-bearing trees and shrubs
- a pond or boggy area
- nestboxes, bughouses and hedgehog highways
- mow your lawn, or a chunk of it, only 1-2 times per year
- say "no" to peat and garden chemicals.

Trees, shrubs and climbers

Native species are important: supporting thousands of species of bird, insect, bat, fungi and lichen.

Please consider berry-bearing shrubs such as spindle, cotoneaster, dogwood and of course the Viburnums.

And remember: dead wood, prunings and fallen leaves are all habitat, too.

Ivy provides year-round value

This could be the most important native plant in the UK! It has very late summer pollen and is full of nectar, feeding species that hibernate over the winter. Its black berries provide food for birds all winter and it provides refuge for many species.

Border and meadow plants

Each or any of the following could be helpful in your gardens:

- Comfrey
- Hardy geranium
- Foxglove
- Calamint, Marjoram & Thyme
- Lavender
- Field scabious
- Goldenrod
- Yarrow.

Lawns

Your lawn may be a green desert for wildlife, especially if you closely mow it all through the summer and if you carefully remove plants from it that aren't grass! It's better for wildlife if you stop feeding or treating your lawn and let parts of it remain unmowed.

Other aspects of your new resilient garden

Your natural or forest garden allows wildlife to have first dibs:

- Self-seeded plants like herb-robot and forget-me-not are welcome.
- Dandelions and lesser celandine remain in the uncut spring lawn.
- Finished seed-heads remain all winter to be tidied only in spring.

- We can make use of vertical space, for feeders and boxes.
- Water is a valuable feature.

Go the extra mile

Try not to think of your garden in isolation, but as a jigsaw piece, slotting in near to other green spaces to provide wildlife with 'corridors' in which to move around. You might:

- Remove some hard surfacing and make a pond
- Lift away some lawn turf to provide larger areas for perennial plants and shrubs
- Leave your lawn long apart from a mowed pathway
- Add plants into extended borders: a diverse range of pollinator-friendly plants that giving nectar for most of the year
- Let climbers, including ivy, trail along fences and walls.

