

Bee Friendly

Town Award for Parish Council's and Schools

Supporting Links

Bumblebee Conservation Trust | www.bumblebeeconservation.org/

Bee Friendly Trust | <https://beefriendlytrust.org/meet-the-uks-first-bee-friendly-towns/>

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust | <https://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk>

Butterfly Conservation | <https://butterfly-conservation.org>

UK Moths | <https://www.ukmoths.org.uk>

NERC Act | Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk>

Biodiversity Enhancement Toolkit

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Introduction

The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries. This is largely a manmade crisis, of habitat loss, pesticide use, pollution and climate change.

This is a short guide to highlight what we could do to make our own local patch a more nature-friendly area that will also benefit our pollinators. Making space for nature shows that even small actions can make a big difference.



Pollinators

We have over 250 species of bee in the UK with bumblebees and the Honey Bee making up about 10% of that figure. Around a quarter of our bee species do not collect pollen or make nests but are "cuckoos" of other bee species.

Many other invertebrates are pollinators, not just bees. Approximately a quarter of the UK's beetles are pollinators - so around 1,000 species.

There are over 280 species of hoverfly recorded in Britain, 57 species of butterfly and 2,500 species of moth. Wasps and many species of flies are also pollinators.

Even in a flowery garden there is a good chance of seeing a variety of these different species. Gardens are one of the few habitats where insect numbers might actually be increasing.

It is a sobering fact that today pollinators often do better in suburban areas than in the intensively farmed countryside that surround them.

Actions

There are five recommended actions to increase pollinator numbers:

- 1 Plant more native flowers, shrubs and trees that provide nectar and pollen
- 2 Leave patches of land to grow wild that can support pollinators
- 3 Cut grass less often and ideally remove cuttings to allow plants to flower
- 4 Avoid disturbing or destroying nesting/hibernating insects by having grass margins, bare soil and dead wood
- 5 Think carefully about pesticide use - avoid where pollinators are active or where plants are in flower

Studies have shown that longer areas of grass can boost butterfly numbers, providing the habitat to breed and food for caterpillars. Areas of long grass will also benefit grasshoppers, beetles and the development of ant-hills.

Creating small earth mounds with south facing slopes and scrapes of bare earth will help many species of solitary bee. These can be sown with wildflower seed but ensuring that bare areas are maintained.

Actions (continued)

Meadows of native wildflowers can be created on suitable areas of grassland that were formerly mown and where coarse species of plant like docks and nettles are not present. Even smaller mini-meadows can make a difference.

[Creating wildflower meadows / RHS Gardening](#)

It is important to distinguish between a native meadow of perennial flowers - that come back year on year, and a colourful display of annuals, such as cornflower and poppy, etc. Managing expectation is important as people have different preconceptions. Both methods have their benefits - but require different management and maintenance. For long term change with less onerous demands, a perennial wildflower meadow would be the preference, particularly for larger areas of ground.

Ponds can provide important habitat - and have declined across the country. A low-lying area that floods in winter may be a good choice for pond creation.

[How to build a pond | The Wildlife Trusts](#)

This underlies the principle of getting to know the land you have - what direction does it face, what is drainage like, what soil conditions are there? All this can feed into your decisions.

If the current boundary to a site is fenced - are there opportunities to plant a native hedgerow? There is great satisfaction to watch birds forage along a hedgerow you have planted. Blackthorn can provide an early source of nectar before most plants are flowering.

Consideration of a long flowering season is also important - providing flowers from March to October. Anyone who has managed a garden will have good insight in establishing the right plants. In urban areas, there is no reason why a mix of native and horticultural varieties can't be mixed to provide the optimum conditions. Ivy is an important late flowering plant.

Setting Objectives:

The best way to start is by conducting a survey of Parish Council maintained areas, looking at parks, road verges, allotments and other open spaces. This assessment should provide a few key areas for improving the habitat condition. Map the spaces to see where actions have the additional benefit of being joined-up. This could include private gardens or land in other ownership if they help link sites. Is it possible to make green corridors across your area?

Creating an Action Plan:

- ✓ Develop an action plan based on your chosen key sites.
- ✓ Where possible, engage the local community in assessing what can be done and in providing help, advice and volunteer time.
- ✓ Create a simple plan to publicise what you are doing - perhaps using the Parish Council notice board and local press/websites

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- ✓ Make sure to photograph "before and after" images of the site as a record of progress.
- ✓ Keep publicising what you are doing and engaging with the local community.