

Autumn Meadow Lawns

It's traditional for meadows to be cut in late summer or the beginning of autumn after the flowers have set seed. The arisings are taken for hay and removed so that the fertility of the soil is not increased and now is the time to sow yellow rattle while the seeds are fresh. It's also known as meadow maker and is a pretty

pollinator food plant which is a parasite of grasses, so it's main purpose is to reduce their vigour and allow other flowering species to compete and prosper. It isn't essential that all the meadow lawn is cut, in fact it's beneficial if some areas are left standing to provide shelter to wildlife over winter.

Here are some of the later flowering grassland perennials.

- Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*)
- Common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)
- Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*)
- Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)



Beds & Borders



Most of our native border flowers are setting seed now but there are valuable ornamental plants we can add for us to enjoy lovely late colour and to provide forage for pollinating insects. Aster, Rudbeckia and Helenium are all 'daisy' flowers, open and flat headed, easy for small insects to access and each made up of many

tiny flowers, perfect for providing lots of food in a compact space. Other shapes of ornamental flowers are still going strong too like Penstemon with a head similar to foxglove, Persicaria with its tiny flowers arranged up a poker like stem and Sedum a flat head or umbel beloved by so many insects, particularly butterflies.

Some of our native perennials can be long lasting and we might find a few still going strong into autumn.

- Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*)
- Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber* and 'Albus') dead head regularly for a supply of flowers into autumn.
- Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) a meadow plant but forming a strong clump of foliage so good in borders too.
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) another meadow flower also lovely in borders.
- Wild Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) a tall plant adding structure to the autumn border, food for insects and seeds for us to freshen the breath!



Some of the best ornamental plants we grow are at their best now.

- Anemone x hybrida
- Aster eg 'Monch'
- Cosmos – annuals grown for seed flower late and are very popular with bees
- Helenium autumnale cultivars
- Sedum eg 'Matrona'
- Dahlia – single flowered varieties only.



Autumn Shrubs and Hedgerows



Our native shrubs and hedges have almost all finished flowering and are now showing off their brilliant autumn colour as well as a feast of berries and fruits for the birds. There is one native plant we find in our hedgerows though which is now in full bloom, not everyone's favourite and quite

insignificant to us its flowers offer the last chance of the year for pollinating insects to forage. Look closely at a mature ivy in flower and on a sunny day it will be covered in flies, wasps, hover flies, honey bees and solitary ivy bees, every garden should have at least one, it's indispensable.

- Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Some ornamental shrubs can be found flowering in autumn too, these have flowers which pollinating insects can feed from.

- *Buddleja davidii* – keep dead heading *Buddleja* and it will continue to flower right into autumn.
- *Ceanothus* 'Autumnal Blue'
- *Fatsia japonica*
- *Fuchsia magellanica*
- *Persicaria amplexicaulis* cultivars – Flowers late into autumn and happy in the shade by shrubs
- Roses – dead headed regularly roses will keep on flowering, single flowered varieties are the ones for insects.



Ivy



Fatsia Japonica



Fuchsia



Persicaria



Roses

Trees



Our deciduous native trees are now turning colour as they ready themselves for leaf fall. In our woodland and in the canopy of individual trees it's the ivy growing up them which is providing forage for pollinating insects in this season but beneath the trees there are a few ornamental plants we can add which will do well in the shade and provide food for pollinators.

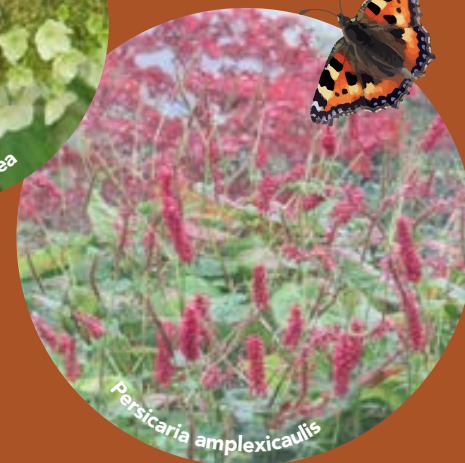
- *Anemone x hybrida*
- *Cyclamen hederifolium*
- *Hydrangea* cultivars
- *Persicaria amplexicaulis*



Cyclamen hederifolium



Hydrangea



Persicaria amplexicaulis



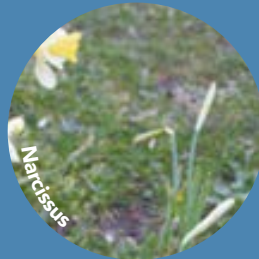
Winter Meadow Lawns

Most of our lawns will have been cut in late summer or autumn but an area left to provide refuge and shelter for insects, small mammals and amphibians and food for seed eating birds can be a great benefit to our gardens' wildlife. Not only a resource for nature but also on a cold frosty winter's morning when the frozen dew sparkles in the sun the effect is magical.

Not many natives can be found flowering in the turf but a few flowers can be seen taking advantage of mild spells.

- Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)
- Snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*)

Although there's not much to see superficially, beneath the lawn especially on south facing banks, will be the tunnels of overwintering solitary mining bees and perhaps bumble bee nests too.



Ornamental winter flowering bulbs can make perfect additions to a meadow lawn and can provide an early meal for any pollinators out searching for food.

- Anemone blanda • Crocus cultivars • Narcissus eg pseudonarcissus – our native daffodil

Beds & Borders



Hellebores are the stars of our winter beds and borders, when very little else is in flower they are at their best and offer forage for pollinators. Usually only queen bumble bees are large and strong enough to be out in winter temperatures but on mild sunny days even honey bees might be seen looking for food.

Helleborus foetidus – our native Hellebore, to which we can add the more colourful and larger flowered ornamentals.

- Helleborus argutifolius
- Viola odorata
- Helleborus x hybridus cultivars – these are the most colourful ranging from white to nearly black.
- Pulmonaria cultivars



Winter Shrubs and Hedgerows

Some of our native hedgerow shrubs like dogwood and willow can give us colour in winter but have little to offer pollinators. There are ornamental shrubs though which flower through the winter to give us colourful blooms and provide forage for any insects out looking for food.

- Mahonia x media – bright yellow sprays of flowers scented of lily of the valley and the main source of forage for winter flying bumble bees.
- Sarcococca – a small insignificant shrub until it flowers in January when its scent fills the garden.
- Hamamelis x intermedia cultivars – spidery scented blooms.
- **Cornus mas**
- Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn' - another heavily scented shrub with deep throated flowers for longer tongued bumble bees.
- Viburnum tinus – a common evergreen shrub happy grown in shade or sun.



Mahonia



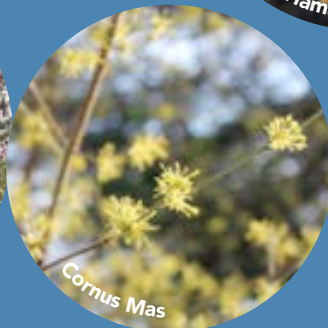
Sarcococca



Hamamelis



Viburnum



Cornus Mas



Trees



During the winter most of our native trees have lost their leaves and appear dormant but there are a few which begin flowering very early when the weather is still cold, although wind pollinated their catkins are full of pollen for early bees.

- Hazel (Corylus avellana)
- Salix melanostachys
- Snowdrops (Galanthus nivalis) perfect under trees.
- Winter Aconite (Eranthis hyemalis) a naturalised bulb which loves shade.
- Prunus cerasifera 'Nigra' a purple leaved form of a naturalised tree, also known as cherry plum.
- Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis' - the first ornamental cherry to flower, it does so sporadically though the winter, just a few flowers at a time.



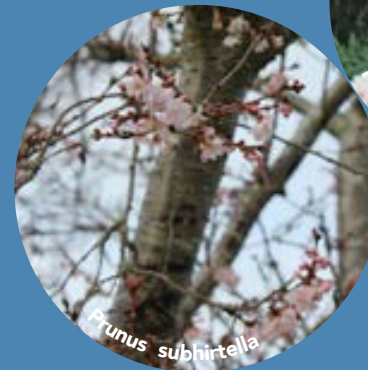
Hazel



Salix melanostachys



Prunus cerasifera



Prunus subhirtella



Snowdrops





nature isn't neat

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