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# A pollinators guide to their favourite Seasonal Plants





# A Pollinators guide to their favourite plants

Here at Nature Isn't Neat we thought it was a good idea to put together a general guide on seasonal planting, thinking of our gardens as a series of habitats providing shelter and food for our lovely pollinators the bumblebees, solitary bees, honeybees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies, wasps, beetles, flies and more.



We are fairly sure that if pollinators could design a garden of their choice it would include different plants providing food throughout the year. There would be a choice of places for homes to be made such as gaps in walls, areas of bare earth, hidden spaces in sheds, empty bird boxes and log piles. There would be a supply of water and the warmth of the sun, most importantly this entire garden would be free of harmful chemicals.

Plants and pollinators evolved together, with plants providing nectar to attract the insects which would carry their pollen to others of their species and so allow them to set seed and multiply.

This symbiotic relationship feeds and nurtures the pollinators and until very recently has continued successfully for millennia, but now our pollinating insects are in steep decline so they really need our help.

There are many species of pollinators so we need to provide a variety of flowers for them, those that have short tongues need a different type of plant to the long tongued pollinators so there needs to be a diversity of flower shapes and sizes in our gardens too. It might surprise some to know that the plants most visited by our lovely pollinators can be seen on road verges, open spaces and are already in our gardens. Pollinators prefer the habitats and species some of us consider untidy, unruly and worse of all call "weeds". These "weeds" are native flowering species that pollinators rely on and are the most important plants in our gardens.



This booklet is arranged using the four seasons as a guide to when we might find particular pollinator plants in flower. Within these seasons the pages are arranged by the various habitats we might find in our gardens, meadow lawns, beds and borders, shrubs and hedgerows and trees, including the plants we might find growing beneath them.

Download a copy at [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk)

To help us all choose the best plants for pollinators the National Botanic Garden of Wales carried out research on the plants most visited by pollinators. The researchers collected pollen and analysed its DNA to trace the food supply back to the flower species – clever hey?

To make things simple we have presented images and names of the flowering species as they appear during the seasons and where in our gardens we might find them. There are both naturally occurring native plants and those we can purchase.

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# Spring Meadow Lawns

The grass is growing again and within it the flowering plants we typically call weeds. Left to grow they can be brilliant sources of food for pollinators so if we don't need all the lawn to be flat grass then we can just mow an area for play, perhaps a path through

to a seat or around the edges to keep the meadow lawn looking intentional.

Don't feed or weed, this creates a grass monoculture which reduces biodiversity dramatically, aim to reduce fertility by taking away any mowings.

The flowers coming up by themselves might include:

- Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Lady Smock (*Cardamine pratense*)
- Cowslip (*Primula veris*)
- Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens, bulbosus and acris*)
- Germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*)



If these flowers don't arrive by themselves we can buy plug plants of them and others to plant into the lawn and add drifts of spring flowering bulbs such as:

- Crocus species • Anemone blanda • Snakes Head Fritillaria (*Fritillaria meleagris*)

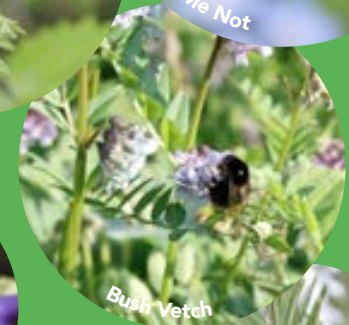
# Beds & Borders



The plants in our beds and borders are coming into growth again and threaded through the ones we've planted will be those that have put themselves there.

They've done so because they've found the conditions to be perfect for their particular needs and so will thrive, as will the pollinating insects for which they provide pollen and nectar.

- Celandine (*Ficaria verna*)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)
- Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*)
- Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*)
- Forget Me Not (*Myosotis arvensis*)



There are ornamental plants we can buy to make our beds and borders even better for pollinators and more colourful for us too.

- Helleborus x hybridus cultivars
- Pulmonaria cultivars
- Euphorbia martinii
- Rosmarinus officinalis
- Aquilegia cultivar
- Muscari neglectum – bulbs planted in the autumn





# Spring Shrubs and Hedgerows



Spring is the best time of year for flowers in our hedges and shrub borders, not only among the shrubs themselves but also the smaller plants at their feet. These native species make wonderful hedging plants and under storey.

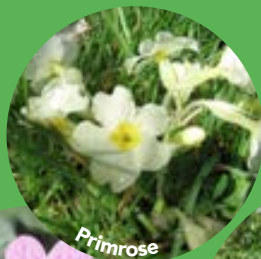
- Sloe (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Goat willow (*Salix caprea*)
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
- Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
- Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)



Sloe



Foxglove



Primrose



Geranium



Hawthorn



Allium sicutum



Ornamental shrubs can be great for pollinators too, either as part of a hedge or free standing and some low growing perennial plants enjoy the shade at their feet.

- Pyracantha cultivars
- Cotoneaster – horizontalis is one of the smaller ones
- Ribes sanguineum
- Geranium macrorrhizum
- Allium sicutum – a bulb needs to be planted in autumn
- Ajuga reptans cultivars

# Trees



Trees can be grouped together in a larger garden as a mini woodland or a productive orchard. Planted as individuals there are species suitable for even really small gardens and being the largest plants we grow, if carefully chosen, they can provide huge numbers of flowers and a brilliant source of food for pollinators.

- Willow (*Salix caprea* and *viminalis*)
- Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
- Stinking Hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*)
- Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*)

We might not all have room for an oak tree but the smaller native species make excellent garden trees and their shade allows early flowering woodland bulbs and perennials to flourish.



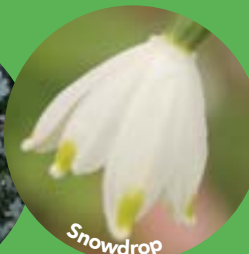
Crab Apple



Willow



Malus cultivar



Snowdrop



Stinking Hellebore



Prunus cultivar

There are a huge number of spring flowering ornamental trees to choose from, the better ones for pollinators have single flowers and the more flowers there are the better we and the insects will like them.

- Malus cultivars - apples, choose a rootstock to suit the space, even a pot on a patio.
- Cotoneaster 'Cornubia'
- Prunus cultivars – flowering cherries and plums, universally loved by pollinators and humans.
- Anemone nemorosa - wood Anemone, buy bulbs to plant in autumn
- Hyacinthoides non-scripta – bluebells, watch out for and avoid 'Spanish' bluebells
- Galanthus nivalis – snowdrops, buy bulbs to plant 'in the green' just after flowering





# Summer Meadow Lawns



As the grass grows longer the mown paths and edges look crisp and well kept whilst allowing the rich species mix to blossom providing us with colour and interest and a wide range of pollinating insects the diverse flower types on which to feed. Here are a few wild summer flowers you may find already in the grass matrix.

- Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)
- White Clover (*Trifolium repens*)
- Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)
- Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lutetia corniculatus*)
- Cats Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*)
- Smooth Hawksbeard (*Crepis capillaris*)



Adding larger growing more colourful species adds more diversity, they can be planted as small plug plants almost any time of year or sown as seed to a cleared patch of soil in the autumn or spring.

- Oxe Eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- Meadow Geranium (*Geranium pratense*)
- Greater knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*)
- Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)
- Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*)
- Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*)

# Beds & Borders

The beauty of our borders in summer are for most people the high point of the garden year. Full to bursting with flower colour and scent and as long as the flowers are the right ones to attract pollinating insects then it will

have with the gentle hum of bees as a soundtrack.

Here are a few vital 'weeds' we might find there, our soil type will determine which native plants will do well.

- Wild marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*)
- Vipers bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)
- Self Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)
- Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)
- Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) – a naturalised plant and a magnet for Humming Bird Hawkmoths
- Hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*)



There are many lovely ornamental plants which we can add which will supplement the plants already enjoying our beds and borders and which will be of huge benefit to the pollinators. A mix of flower shapes and sizes means that they will benefit a range of species.

- Geranium 'Rozanne'
- Nepeta racemosa eg 'Walker's Low'
- Lavandula angustifolia and x intermedia cultivars
- Stachys byzantina
- Echinops ritro
- Cirsium rivulare



# Summer Shrubs and Hedgerows

Many native hedges and shrubs have flowered by mid summer and it's the climbers threading through them and the lower growing plants of the hedge bottom which are providing interest for us and forage for pollinating insects.

Here are some you might find popping up in and around garden hedges and shrub borders.

- Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Wild rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)
- Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)
- Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)
- Nettle Leaved Bellflower (*Campanula trachelium*)



Wild Rose



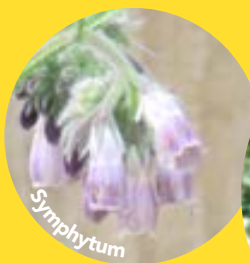
Honeysuckle



Red Campion



Rosa species



Symphytum



Buddleja

Some of our favourite garden shrubs are excellent for pollinators as are some perennial plants which will grow well with them.

- Buddleja davidii
- Rosa species – the simple open flowered ones
- Euonymus 'Silver Queen'
- Caryopteris clandonensis
- Symphytum cultivars
- Ajuga reptans 'Catlin's Giant'

# Trees



Many trees have finished flowering by summer but depending on the weather we might find some still providing pollen and nectar. Some larger shrubs, both natives and ornamentals, can fulfil the role of trees in smaller gardens.

## Natives:

- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*)
- Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*)
- Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*)
- Fireweed (*Chamaerion angustifolium*)



Elder



Guelder Rose



Buddleja 'Black Knight'



Phlox paniculata



Syringa vulgaris

Ornamental plants. The very large shrubs can take the place of trees, so will have their heads in the sun.

- Buddleja 'Black Knight'
- Syringa vulgaris
- Philadelphus 'Virginal'
- Phlox paniculata
- Geranium phaeum
- Vinca minor