

What's been happening?.....

It's been a **buzzy** time for the Wild About Plants team. We were delighted that so many schools throughout the UK requested Bee Scene packs and we hope that everybody has found them useful. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust were the first organisation to go on expedition. Two schools in Norfolk have been on expedition and reported that their areas was not good for bees. We wondered if this was because of the colder spring meaning plants were later to flower in the east of the country. Nineteen flowers have been planted in the virtual meadow and 600 children have been on expedition. Thank you to all the children and teachers for feeding back their results.

Congratulations to Challock Primary School in Kent, Oaksey Primary School in Wiltshire, New North Community School in London and West Earlham Infant School in Norfolk. They have won copies of Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield's excellent new book 'Make it Wild! 101 Things to Make and Do Outdoors', which have been donated by Natural England through their Big Wildlife Garden project. We still have 4 copies of this book to give away to the first school to complete the survey in the West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber and North East.

So get out there and Bee Scene!

A bit more about some of the wildflowers

Our bee scene flowers are not just important for bumblebees. Many wildflowers have had a variety of uses in the past. For example being used for medicine, plant dyes and soil conditioner (making the soil better for growing plants in). Read on to find out more.

Foxglove

We included the common foxglove on our list as it can be found in many locations across England. Sometimes you see the flower spike shaking a bit and hear a buzzing. Look closer and you often find a bumblebee working its way up the tubular flowers to get to the pollen and nectar. The foxglove is a biennial. This means that it does not flower in its first year of growth but will flower in its second year.

The foxglove is extremely poisonous and should never be eaten. In the past it was discovered that an extract from the foxglove could be used to treat heart conditions and some medicines are still made from foxglove extracts.



A bit more about some of the wildflowers

Comfrey

Is a very interesting plant but you must be careful not to confuse it with foxgloves. If you have a school garden you may like to grow comfrey. You can cut the leaves and place them in a bucket. Fill the bucket up with the leaves and put a lid on it. After a while a liquid will be produce which is rich in nutrients. This liquid can be diluted with water (and used to feed plants like tomatoes - by watering the soil in which the plants are growing. One of the country names for comfrey was 'knightbone', a reminder of its traditional use in healing.



A bit more about some of the wildflowers

Meadow Cranesbill

This is the Wild About Plants team favourite Bee Scene flower mainly due to its pretty cut leaves and the wonderful open purple flowers that can often be seen lining road verges between June and September. Hundreds of years ago the flowers were used in Iceland to make a blueish grey dye. It is a great flower for attracting bumblebees such as the Buff tailed bumble-bee, retdailed bumblebee and white tailed bumblebee.



The Wild About Plants team recently joined Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School in Towcester to go on expedition to their local park. Years 4 and 2 all discovered the leaves of Meadow Cranesbill during a microhunt and are looking forward to seeing the blue flowers later on in the year. They decided their area was good for bees.

Engaging nature workshops

Over the last few months the Wild About Plants team have been running engaging nature workshops at various locations around the country. These workshops have focused on learning outside the classroom and making the most of local natural spaces. Participants have had an opportunity to explore a range of activities and learning opportunities that can be delivered in natural spaces and discussed group management and risk assessment. The Wild About Plants team will be running these workshops next year throughout England. If you are interested in finding out more please do not hesitate to contact us.



Congratulations to Macclesfield RSPB Wildlife Explorers (pictured below) who have been on not one but four Bee Scene expeditions and have recorded differences in the areas they visited. Group leader Tina Hanak said 'It is really important that young people have more access the natural world. The hands-on experience of taking part in a survey like this is lots of fun but also demonstrates to children how important recording and observation are to conservation.'

David Wilson, a member of Wildlife Explorers said that going on a Bee Scene expedition had allowed him to learn lots more about wildflowers, 'We have been finding out all about which plants are important for bees. Even some of the wildflowers we think of as weeds can be a great source of food for bees and other insects'.

To find out more about RSPB Wildlife Explorers visit www.rspb.org.uk/youth/

Even the rainy weather did not stop the wildlife explorers



Bee Scene Word Search

s g y a c j e k s p h y v b h
 o u e x u r f v e a t w u b e
 f u r l d d a t o i d m o r r
 d l f v u n a n s l b b k c b
 j e m b e l x r e l g r m u r
 f w o x r y e f e s w x b a o
 c t c d i v a b p x b c o j b
 w l n o i l e d n a d i n f e
 p f w d n e c t a r i e l c r
 v e o e v a l y b d l z v l t
 d i s a r b x w a l l v a o c
 b u l t r a v i o l e t u v e
 f e t y d w v p s t o l p e b
 u h t x s h r o p g i j c r l
 w t h z y l p a l r z v f q k

biodiversity
 bumblebee
 clover
 comfrey
 cranesbill
 dandelion
 foxglove
 herbrobert
 nectar
 petal
 plot
 pollen
 survey
 ultraviolet

