

Every Little Helps

“We need to move beyond guilt or blame, and get on with the practical tasks at hand.” Sir David Attenborough

Studies by the Natural History Museum amongst others, show that compared to the G7 countries, the UK languishes at the bottom of most biodiversity indices. In West Europe only Ireland and Malta come out worse, and the UK is in the bottom 10% of all countries globally. That decline in biodiversity is the subject of a new documentary series, *Wild Isles*, presented by Sir David Attenborough. So integrating sustainability into our own gardens has never been needed more. With global climate instability, and especially with insect populations plummeting, this is a crucial time to act.

The village gardening club has had many talks from professional gardeners over the years exhorting us to help counter the catastrophic environmental decline caused by recent generations. There are many simple ways to encourage biodiversity in our gardens including:

- Grow a range of plants with different flowering times to ensure a year round food source for insects.
- Focus on single flowers which are easier for insects to access.
- A compost heap recycles food and natural waste such as vegetable peelings, grass cuttings, shredded paper and cardboard. You can use it just as you would bought compost or as a mulch.
- Leave seed heads through the winter to provide food and shelter.
- Consider the no-dig method often employed by growers of organic vegetables, though it applies to ornamental plants, too. Rather than digging, it involves applying organic matter to the soil surface, emulating the natural processes of decomposition allowing plants, fungi and soil organisms to break down and incorporate the organic matter into the soil. In doing so, the soil structure is not disturbed, benefitting worms and other organisms, and therefore the soil's ecosystem remains intact. Yields tend to be bigger when grown in no-dig soils. And it's less effort.
- Mow less, giving wild plants a chance to flower and set seed.
- Instead of using pesticides consider companion planting ie cultivating plants which are mutually beneficial. This can repel unwanted insects as well as add nutrients to the soil, attract pollinating insects and provide protection.
- Carrots and leeks are perfect companions: leeks repel carrot fly while carrots discourage leek moth.
- Plants in the pea family, such as lupins, peas and beans, fix nitrogen from the air and store it in their roots, naturally benefitting the soil.
- Plant French marigolds next to tomatoes, beans and sweetcorn: marigolds emit a strong odour which wards off greenfly and blackfly.



As has been done in other villages the council has acquired some blue 'bee friendly' signs for our commons. They've been placed where bulbs or wild flowers have been sown to let people know and hopefully to reduce any disturbance. They'll be removed after the season.