

the hidden gardens

Bees, Butterflies and Nectar-rich Plants

There are many ways to attract bees and butterflies into your garden, but by ensuring you have a wide range of flowering plants from early spring until late autumn, you will not only encourage a diversity of invertebrate visitors but you will be rewarded with a beautiful garden throughout the seasons. Here are a few ideas from The Hidden Gardens:

- **Seasons**

Hibernating butterflies and queen bumblebees emerge in the sunny, warm days of early spring and will need to replenish their fuel supplies quickly. Crocus, snowdrops and other spring bulbs will provide early nectar, along with early blossom on blackthorn and some fruit trees.

- **Spring**



Buff-tailed bumblebee on crocus



Hoverfly on plum blossom

- **Late summer**



Carder bee on teasel



Hoverfly on rudbeckia

- **Colour**

Bees are trichromatic, meaning they have 3 colour receptors. However, whereas we have red, green and blue receptors, bees have ultra violet, blue and green, so their favourite colours are whites, blues and purples. They do still visit red flowers but they are drawn to the ultraviolet patterns on the petals of these flowers rather than the colour. We can enjoy the red coloured flowers but don't see the ultra violet patterns.



Red tailed bee on cosmos

- **Scent**

Flowering herbs in the summer months provide rich food supplies for insects, as well as beautiful scent and tasty additions to summer cooking. As the day cools towards evening the scent of evening primrose, jasmine, honeysuckle and stock will fill the air and attract moth pollinators.

- **Summer herb border**



Small white on lavender



Bumblebee on oregano

- **Flower shape**

Providing a range of flower shapes will accommodate the various needs of different bee species. For example the Garden Bumblebee has a relatively long tongue compared with the honeybee allowing it to get to the nectar and pollen within longer flowers such as foxgloves and vipers bugloss. The larger Red-tailed Bumblebee needs the landing platform of daisy type flowers and is particularly fond of knapweed, and the small agile Early bumblebee can reach into the drooping flowers of viper's bugloss.



Bumblebee on Viper's bugloss



Carder bee on cirsium



Umbellifer

- **Planting schemes**

Flying insects use a lot of energy foraging from flower to flower so a scheme where plants are grouped together provides an ideal feeding ground as well as visual impact in your garden. It will send out a strong signal of 'plenty of food here'. A meadow area of summer flowering annuals, including the very pretty umbellifers will attract a variety of pollinators.

Summer flower meadow



You will become engrossed in watching the visitors to your flowers and will want to find out more about the different species of bees, butterflies and bugs. Some useful websites with lots of information on identification and how to take part in national surveys are listed below:

www.butterfly-conservation.org

www.bumblebeeconservation.org

www.buglife.org.uk