

Wildlife Gardening Forum



(Short) Newsletter
August 2010

Nag Nag Nag

In the last email there were two requests for you to send information about any new developments, surveys, events and other newsworthy matters - one by the Big Wildlife Garden (BWG) Website team, and one by myself. Unfortunately there was no response, so either the rest of the newsletter was *so exciting* that everyone forgot the requests, or nothing is going on out there, both extremely unlikely scenarios!.

Natural England is supporting the Forum through the BWG, which has been put together with our guidance, and has huge potential for getting sound and unbiased wildlife gardening information to a huge public, as well as advertising our member organisation's events. I feel very strongly that the Forum's members should help to make the BWG a resounding success, so that it can continue to grow and add more information, and be defended from the horrendous cuts that all government agencies now face.

SO! Please send any news items to me at wlgf@stephenmhead.com AND when of public interest to the BWG at headgardener@naturalengland.org.uk

Thank you.
Steve Head

Next Forum Conference

This will be on Wednesday 17th November 2010 at the RHS's Horticultural Halls in London. We are very grateful to the RHS for their support of the meeting. The programme will mark the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, and the role and significance of gardens in supporting our wildlife in a changing environment.

Please contact Steve Head at wlgf@stephenmhead.com if you would like to contribute a talk or a poster for the meeting, especially if it centres on new survey results or other information on how wildlife uses gardens, and the trends for increase of decrease in species.

Wildlife Gardening Forum Development

In the last newsletter we called for volunteers to join the Steering Group to help the Forum develop and adapt to become a sustainable and effective organisation. Several people took up the challenge, and the Steering Group now consists of :

Helen Bostock
Simon Davies

RHS
Partnership Officer Sevenoaks District Council.

Peter Frost	Countryside Council for Wales
Richard Gianfrancesco	Gardening Which?/Freelance
Dr Chris Gibson	Natural England
Becky Groves	Little Groves Nursery
Dr Steve Head	Forum Coordinator
Dan Healy	Natural England
David Hicks	Head of Horticulture, Whipsnade
Brian James	Amateur enthusiast IT/Telecomm/Business consultant
Philip Jeffs	Horticultural Consultant/educator
Amanda Morgan	The Wildlife Trusts
Sarah Pitt.	BBC Radio/TV producer/media specialist
Dr Ken Thompson	Garden Ecologist and Writer
Caroline Ware	Natural History Museum Garden

We had a very significant Steering Group meeting in late July, where we discussed the role and future of the Wildlife Gardening Forum, especially in the light of unprecedented government funding cutbacks, leaving Natural England, our long-term principal sponsor, without any resources to support the Forum after this year. Once approved, the minutes can be made available to anyone who requests them from me, but to summarise the conclusions:

1. The Forum is a worthwhile organisation, with its conferences, networking and communication roles particularly important at present. It has identified a number of important issues and opportunities, but has not in its present form been able to take much action, with for example planners, developers, local authorities, trainers and horticulturalists. The potential for the Forum is considerable, and it needs to build its profile and public influence.
2. The Forum should therefore continue to operate, and achieve financial self-sufficiency through a variety of methods including development grants, project funding and providing services.
3. The Forum should not seek to be a mass-membership organisation, which would put it in competition with its many member charities. Instead it should work at the level of “Wildlife Gardening Professionals” with a membership consisting principally (as at present) of organisations with a strong and practical interest in any aspect of promoting garden biodiversity. This will certainly also include a number of individuals who work in this field in many different capacities but without affiliation to a larger body.
4. Putting it simply, the Forum should not attempt to work at the grass-roots level, but should serve to support, inform, train and facilitate partnerships among the organisations and individuals who do. We will work to coordinate and improve the work of member organisations, and in particular be a source of unbiased practical and scientific information to help everyone.
5. We need a formal legal existence so that we can be able to attract grant-aid and charity funding. The two options would be to set up as a small charity, or as a small business. Either approach would be cheap and straightforward. The balance of opinion was in favour of the charity route, since this would be particularly helpful in fundraising.
6. We will create a business plan to attract funding and bring the organisation to a sustainable position, as a “lean and mean” coordinating body with minimal

- annual costs. The plan may be two-fold, with an initial development phase grant funded, leading to a more project-driven subsequent longer term plan.
7. We will try actively to revive the Forum Steering Groups, with new leaders or “champions” from within the current steering group. Hopefully this will attract support and commitment from many more Forum members.
 8. We need to contact all organisations represented on the Forum to invite them formally to sign up to the Forum’s Manifesto, and to make sure that the whole of the member organisation staff are aware of the Forum and what we do.

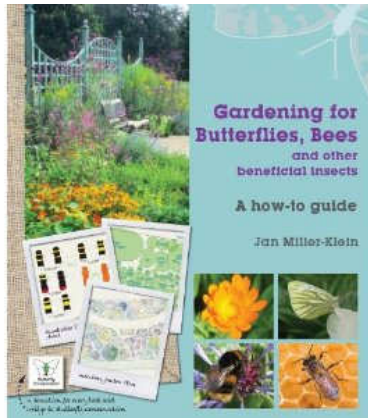
PLEASE !

Can I ask everyone to consider the decisions or suggestions summarised above? In particular, how do you feel about the Forum becoming a legal body? – And do you feel strongly on the company/charity issue? If you represent an organisation, do you think it would support this proposal?

Likewise, do you feel we were wrong to suggest that the Forum should not generally involve itself much at the “grass roots” level, or to seek mass-membership?

If you feel strongly on these or any other issues connected with the development of the Forum, please do get in touch through me at wlgf@stephenmhead.com

New Wildlife Gardening book



Forum Member Jan Miller-Klein’s new book “Gardening for Butterflies, Bees and Other Beneficial Insects” published by Saith Ffynnon Books (7 Sep 2010) is now available through Amazon and other booksellers. It is dedicated to Butterfly Conservation, and with 261 pages, this is a very substantial account of garden butterflies, solitary bees, bumblebees and other insects, and the best native and non-native nectar and pollen plants to attract them through the spring to autumn period. Significantly and very usefully, it includes a section on food-plants for caterpillars, arranged by butterfly families.

Keen gardeners will also like the sections on garden design for insects, including montane gardens, butterfly banks, green roofs and brownfield sites, as well as several island bed or whole-garden designs.

Eating Caterpillars: A project to encourage interest in plants for butterflies

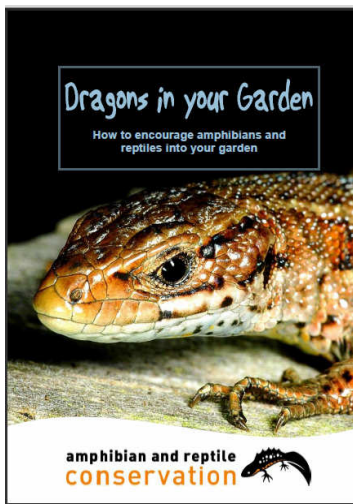
Butterfly Conservation is developing a new project in South West England, which may be of interest to schools operating in parts of Dorset and Somerset.

The project will run activities and workshops for young people (7-11 years of age) propagating, planting and monitoring a range of plants, shrubs and trees, which are

the food of caterpillars or the nectar sources of adult butterflies and moths, to help them learn about the habitat requirements and life cycles of common and widespread butterflies and moths. Funding is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund. If you think your school would like to participate, please contact Dr Sam Ellis. Registering your interest will help the project to achieve funding.

For further information, or to discuss the project please contact Sam Ellis 01929 406039 sellis@butterfly-conservation.org. Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.

Dragons in your Garden : How to encourage amphibians and reptiles into your garden.



Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC)'s new campaign, Dragons in your Garden, is encouraging gardeners to take simple steps to help out the UK's frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards - many of which are disappearing from the wider countryside. The ARC website at www.arc-trust.org/dragons provides a great deal of practical information, and there is an excellent and well illustrated 24 page booklet which you can download from www.arc-trust.org/dragons/download.php , or you can request a paper copy by emailing enquiries@arc-trust.org or calling 01202 391319.

School Pond and Fieldwork Teacher questionnaire

Froglife, like other wildlife organisations, is committed to providing opportunities for 'Learning Outside of the Classroom'. Froglife wants to hear directly from teachers what the big issues are, so that they can put together projects that make a lasting difference to wildlife conservation efforts, and a lasting difference to people's lives too.

A questionnaire specifically for teachers is on the Froglife Website at www.froglife.org/teachers_questionnaire.htm . This seeks to discover how schools use and supervise nature ponds, and the factors which may make a school decide to remove a pond or not have one in the first place. Later sections ask for information about other fieldwork related activities.

Questionnaires such as this are potentially very helpful to the work of the Forum, as the answers will be very helpful in identifying sticking-points and the information we need to provide to help schools overcome their doubts.