

Wildlife Gardening Forum



Autumn Newsletter September 2010

Thanks to everyone who responded so well to my nagging opening shot in the last newsletter, with a really good number of submissions for this one.

Thanks also to those of you who sent their thoughts on the future development of the Forum. Your response was universally encouraging and most people felt that becoming a charity would be a good way forward.

The conference on 17th November is shaping up very nicely, with a very good number of excellent speakers. It will be at the RHS Horticultural Halls, and we are very grateful to the RHS for their sponsorship of the event. There will be tea, coffee and lunch provided. We will have to make a small charge, provisionally £20, to cover the remainder of the costs, 60% of which are being covered by the RHS. I will send out booking details in early October after I get back from holiday.

The next conference after this will be at the Natural History Museum, probably in May, and will feature the museum's admirable wildlife garden, and could take its theme on delivery to the public, and case studies. If you would like to contribute a talk please let me know. **Steve Head** wlgf@stephenmhead.com

Dorset's First Wildlife Garden Competition

Joy Wallis, People and Wildlife Coordinator, Dorset Wildlife Trust



2010 saw the launch of our first county wide wildlife garden competition sponsored by The Garden's Group. This was a welcome and follow on from the Wildlife Garden Plaque scheme I have been running for a couple of years in Dorset. Following a press release and really quite minimal promotion, we attracted over 50 entries all demonstrating huge enthusiasm for wildlife gardening and all the wildlife which visits their gardens.

Clive Farrell of Ryewater Nursery, creator of Butterfly World with Annie Christopher from Bournemouth, winner in the best medium-sized garden category.

We had to select finalists for judging on the basis of how much effort they put into managing the garden for wildlife rather than simply on how long the species list was.

Interesting experiences while judging included wrestling with a fully grown male Greater Stag Beetle which managed to draw blood, flycatchers nesting beside a patio door in a wall creeper, a small wood full of orchids and tales of hedgehogs rolling down hillsides. At the Award Ceremony Clive Farrell talked about his experiences on gardening for butterflies and awarded the prizes of wooden winners plaques, wildlife friendly garden products, books and vouchers. Interest has already been expressed in holding another competition next year with many new entries promised.

NB: Joy has now awarded 210 "This is a Wildlife Friendly Garden" plaques to residents, schools and community gardens in Dorset.

More Big Wildlife Garden Website improvements

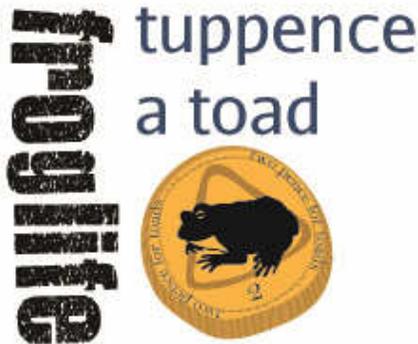
Dan Healey, Natural England

We've just launched some new functionality on the BWG and so now you can add and share tips even if you haven't registered. This would be a fantastic way for Forum members to share their wildlife gardening tips and ideas with the world. Here's how you add a tip:

- Go to the BWG homepage (<http://www.bwg.naturalengland.org.uk>)
- Click on the 'tips' tab
- Click on the 'Tips Editor' tab
- Add your tip (including a relevant photo)
- Click 'Save'.

Once the tip has been checked by the BWG website team, it'll be visible for all to see.

Froglife's Tuppence a Toad Campaign



For 25 years, Froglife has been coordinating the **Toads on Roads** project, with hard-working volunteers across the country rescuing thousands of toads every spring. Toads (*Bufo bufo*) are small, shy amphibians with golden eyes, and their numbers across the UK are dropping. These protected animals are very faithful to their breeding ponds. Thousands of toads return to the water as they come out of hibernation, often crossing busy roads.

In 2010 **Toads on Roads** volunteers saved over 50,000 toads by helping them across roads safely. Many thousands of toads die on roads that don't yet have toad crossings.

Froglife aims to give the **Toads on Roads** project a boost with extra funding, research and awareness raising activities. We would like to raise money for:

- A funding pot that Toad Patrols can dip into to buy vital equipment like hi-vis vests, buckets, and torches.
- Research into alternative crossing options such as toad tunnels and tunnels fencing.
- Publications with advice for patrollers, planners and the public.
- A website where people can log their toad sightings and toad crossings.

Froglife aims to make this our biggest campaign ever – we want to put an end to toad deaths on roads, and share important toad-friendly messages in creative ways with as many people as possible.

The **Tuppence a Toad** campaign asks people to give us their small change to help us achieve this vital work to protect toads.

- We are challenging businesses to raise 2p for every toad we save.
- We are inviting the public to undertake sponsored adventures as well as asking them to collect and donate their small change.
- Resources will be available for schools, youth and community groups to learn more about these special animals and to help raise money for the campaign.
- Pubs with toad-themed names will also be invited to “put a jar on the bar” for small change, with packs to download including pub quizzes and fundraising ideas.

Tucking in the Toads for Winter



The campaign will be launched with a party to say ‘goodnight!’ as the toads settle down for winter hibernation. **Tucking in the Toads** will be held on Friday 1st October 2010 at the Orton Hall Hotel, Peterborough. This event will include short films, guest speakers and bedtime-themed refreshments including hot chocolate and cookies! We are inviting Toad Patrollers, toad lovers and general Froglife fans to celebrate the precious work of our volunteers, and reveal our campaign to give toads a helping hand into the future.

(I think the toad on the left has drunk too much fizzy wine and isn't feeling very well Ed.)

An Evening at Toad Hall

We will be returning to Orton Hall Hotel on 2nd April 2011 to hold a gala evening aimed at putting the fun into fundraising! The One Show's wildlife presenter Mike Dilger (*a great character Ed.*) will be our special guest

speaker. After nibbles, drinks and chat, there will be an auction with some fantastic items, including a holiday on a South African game reserve (includes two return flights and a guided tour to find giant African bullfrogs, and many other items. We are ensuring there is something to appeal to every interest group and budget, to raise funding to help toads. After the auction, there will be a variety of games and activities

aiming to raise small donations, including Scalextric racing, a quiz, tiddly winks and a frog race!

For more information on **Tuppence a Toad** and how you can help, please contact Froglife: www.froglife.org/tuppence

Call for information on garden plants and wildlife

Shaun Wolfe-Murphy wmassc@aol.com

Great to hear from Shaun in Northern Ireland – welcome to the Forum. His request is important – we really need much more information on the wildlife credentials of “ordinary” garden plants that gardeners would actually want to use in their designs. Forum gardeners could be very helpful here. Please send him your thoughts.

Ecologists often implore landscape and garden designers to use more native plants. However, in these artificial habitats, it is not necessary to be a martyr to native status. Plenty of species and cultivars of garden plants can support biodiversity as well or better than our natives, and are much more likely to be used if recommended - but what are they?

I am compiling a list of 'wildlife-friendly' plants for use in Northern Ireland in garden and landscaping projects. Some information is available online, in particular the Natural England and Countryside Council for Wales' web-sites, but these are far from comprehensive. Lists in wildlife gardening books I have found to be very incomplete and far too general. My main criteria for wildlife-friendliness are -

- Native - Most native species that occur in Northern Ireland get a free pass onto the list if they have any merit in landscape/garden design, they are themselves wildlife. Some species native to the UK, but not Ireland get on the list, but for many there is merit in protecting their natural range.
- Nectar - Range and abundance of nectar/pollen-feeding invertebrates - plants known to produce palatable and accessible nectar in suitable quantities are certainly wildlife-friendly, and the insects likely to be appreciated by gardeners and garden users alike.
- Other invertebrates - Suitability for a range of herbivores, sap suckers etc, some of which are undoubtedly garden pests.
- Seeds and berries - Reliable production of palatable berries and seeds in good quantity, particularly useful for birds.

After an initial trawl of information sources I have a reasonable list, but I am sure still incomplete. The Plants for Bugs project will surely fill gaps (and possibly dispel a few myths). In the meantime, there are plants that I feel may be of value, but would like the benefit of other people's observations.

Do you know anything about the wildlife credentials of these plants?

- Some *Agastache* are already listed, but these varieties and species would seem to be suited for Northern Ireland: 'Firebird', 'Apricot Sunrise',

'Tangerine Dreams', 'Painted Lady', and *Agastache aurantiaca*. Do they attract nectar feeders?

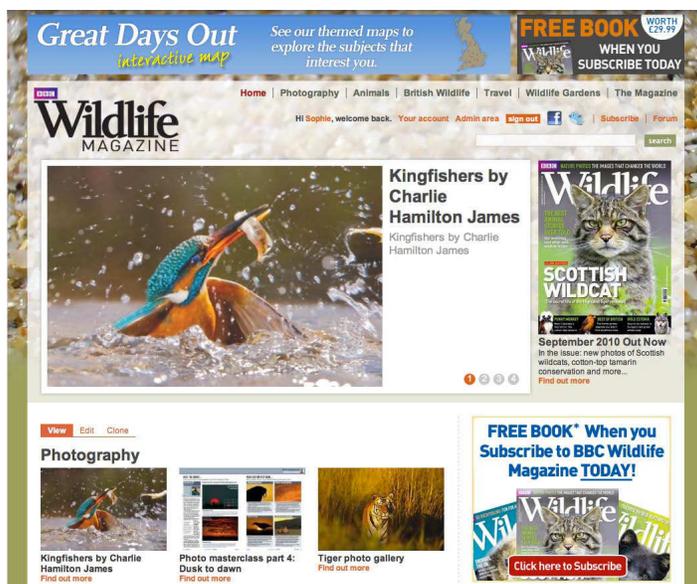
- I have Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa* on the list. What about Silkweed *Asclepias syriaca* and Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias incarnate* ?.
- *Bergenia cordifolia* is provisionally included - what about other *Bergenia* species/varieties - Are they attractive for nectar feeders? is the ground cover itself enough justification for general inclusion of Elephant's ears?
- Yellow Oxe-eye *Buphthalmum salicifolium* would appear to be a shoe in, but I need good corroboration.
- Japanese Meadowsweet *Filipendula purpurea* is showier than its wild cousin - is it equally attractive to insects?
- Goat's-rue *Galega officinalis* is already on my list, what about *G. orientalis*?
- Day Lily *Hemerocallis* is sometimes recommended as wildlife friendly - it didn't persist in my garden, and I don't remember it being very busy. If it has enough supporters I will add it to the list.
- Spring Pea *Lathyrus vernus* would be useful if it did provide early nectar - anybody checked this one?
- I have included *Ligularia* (*Ligularia dentata* (aka *clivorum*)) and 'The Rocket'. There are several other species that should grow well here - I have no idea if they too should be on the list - they are from the other side of the world, but are our bugs fussy?
- Climbing Honeysuckles are well featured - but a couple I am not so sure about: *Lonicera x brownii* 'Dropmore Scarlet', *Lonicera x italica* - anybody growing these noticed insect activity? (Shrubby Honeysuckles are on my alternative list of species **not** to recommend as wildlife-friendly).
- I somewhat reluctantly added *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* - I don't remember seeing it ever in flower (but I also don't remember looking thoroughly). What about other member of the genus? Is their structure alone enough to make them 'wildlife friendly'?
- I have included Fleece Flower *Persicaria affinis* and cultivars - I can't find other corroboration, but to me it always seems busy with insects. What about *Persicaria bistorta*?
- Our native cinquefoils are certainly wildlife-friendly, but perhaps not garden worthy. What about Sulphur Cinquefoil *Potentilla recta*?

- I would also stop short of advocating Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. for gardens, but do garden cultivars such as *Rubus fruticosus* 'Merton Thornless' support our fauna to the same degree?
- Nasturtium *Tropaeolum majus* must be included - but I gather that some varieties have empty nectaries. Anyone know which varieties are OK?
- Of the shrubs, I have a particular problem with Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* (which is on Chris Gibson's list for Natural England). The wild genotype occurs extensively in Ireland and the UK, where it is often naturalised in planted and semi-natural woodlands. In this situation it is a shy flowerer and its spread (mainly by layering) has had a devastating impact upon ground-flora development and tree recruitment. I wouldn't dream of including on my list of wildlife-friendly plants to recommend. Varieties of *Prunus laurocerasus* may be a different matter - Despite being poisonous, 'Zabelania' and 'Otto Luyken' in particular are used *ad nauseam* in landscaping here in Northern Ireland. 'Rotundifolia' also in hedging and bulkier landscape blocks. My instinct is not to include these cultivars as wildlife-friendly - but am I being too influenced by the sins of the wild type?
- Shrubby Ragwort (*Brachyglottis* Dunedin Hybrids) grow fine here - they look like they should be good nectar plants, but I can't find any confirmation.
- Similarly, I can't find recommendations for Hupeh Crab *Malus hupehensis*.
- Whilst there are *Escallonia* on the list, some such as C.F. Ball, have long tubular flowers. Do these make nectar inaccessible?
- And lastly, landscapers in particular find evergreen shrubs useful - so evergreens that are wildlife-friendly are at a premium - what about *Osmanthus delavayi* or x *burkwoodii*? Tubular flowers again and probably self-compatible, but are the flowers visited by insects? - are the fruits produced in quantity and eaten by birds?

Direct correspondence welcome. Many thanks
 Shaun Wolfe-Murphy wmassc@aol.com

BBC Wildlife website www.bbcwildlifemagazine.com

BBC Wildlife is delighted to announce that it has relaunched its website. Not only is it beautiful and wonderfully informative, but forum members may also be interested to see that we now have an entire section devoted to Wildlife Gardening.



This section contains all of the articles, written by Prof Steve Harris of Bristol University, that were published in the magazine from summer 2008 to winter 2009. These cover such topics as how to make your lawn and walls wildlife-friendly, how to use water and promote rot, and how to monitor your garden wildlife.

Meanwhile, in our British wildlife section, we explain how to understand newt behaviour, identify garden

birds nests and figure out who has been eating what on your lawn.

Please help us to spread the word that this wonderful resource is available - and let us know if you have any great ideas that could benefit the site.

Pond projects in Teesside

Rachel Jackson Tees Valley Pondscape Office

The Tees Valley Pondscape is a new initiative led by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership and delivered by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. The project is working to redress the loss of ponds and their associated wildlife across the Tees Valley. The project is supported by Natural England's Countdown 2010 fund and the Environment Agency.



Amazingly dedicated volunteers hand digging a pond in the snow at the Lucite, Cassel Works in Billingham

The project started in October 2008 and will run until March 2011.

Tees Valley Pondscape will be

- Surveying ponds and their associated wildlife, ranging from invertebrates, plants amphibians to birds and mammals.
- Creating a comprehensive data base of ponds and pond life enabling us to focus pond work where it will have the greatest benefit to wildlife.

- Strategically creating new high quality ponds using data on the Tees Valley Pondscape database and maps.
- Restoring the ecological condition of priority ponds so that they provide a high quality habitat for rare and vulnerable species.
- Providing information, advice and training on pond creation and management for landowners and managers.
- Creating opportunities for volunteers and community groups to learn about ponds and help with wildlife surveys and practical conservation projects.
- Working to secure the status and protection of key pond sites.

For a detailed breakdown of the Tees Valley Pondscape aims and objectives go to [tees-valley-pondscape-project](#) . If you want to be added to our e-newsletter list please register by contacting Rachel Jackson by emailing teesvalleyponds@teeswildlife.org

Garden Wildlife Surveys in Woking Borough

Gill Stribley, leader of Woking LA21 Gardening For Life group

(I must apologise for failing to include this in the spring newsletter. Long term monitoring projects like this are all too rare, and we need more groups to emulate this excellent work Ed.)

Woking residents have been taking part since 1999 in garden wildlife surveys organised by Woking LA21 Gardening For Life group, in partnership with Woking Borough Council. The results may be of general interest to Forum members as an example of contribution of data at the local data and engagement with the local community to encourage environmentally friendly gardening to attract wildlife.



The 2009 survey showed trends in species presence in gardens. For example the percentage of participants recording the song thrush in the 2007 to 2009 surveys has remained around 64% compared to 42% in 1999. However the presence of the stag beetle significantly fell from 49% in 2007 to 40% in 2009 similar to 1999. Comparison between the garden profile of 1999 and 2009 showed little change except an increase in vegetable growing. Questions were included on size of trees structure of front gardens.

A full report of the 2009 and other reports are available on the web site of Woking LA21: <http://sites.google.com/site/wokingla21>.

Here is just one of the interesting tables from the Woking Study. There are welcome significant increases in veg, fruit bush and trees, but look at the rise in decking!
Thank you Alan Titchmarsh (not) Ed.

Feature	1999	1999	2009	2009
	% with feature	Average % cover	% with feature	Average % cover
Lawn	90.7	44 ^a	90.2	45.5
Flowerbeds	86.2	14	85.8	14.9
Shrubberies	62.3	7	65.1	11.0
Gravel or paving	85.0	13	83.6	16.6
Wooden decking	2.3 ^{***}	b	9.8 ^{***}	4.6
Vegetables	32.5 [*]	3	40.4 [*]	7.5
Fruit bushes	30.4 [*]	2	37.5 [*]	3.5
Hedges	54.5	4	56.4	7.4
Trees over 5m tall	61.7 [*]	5	70.5 [*]	7.2
Trees under 5m tall	55.8 [*]	3	64.0 [*]	5.4
Pond	29.6	1	32.7	2.9
Wild area	41.8	4	41.8	9.6

Significant differences: * 5%, **1%, *** 0.1%

Lots of Hover Flies ?

Fern Alder fern.fx@blueyonder.co.uk

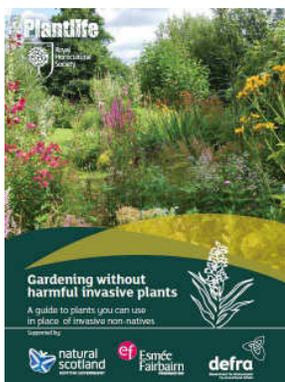
Have you noticed that there are mega numbers of hover flies this year? Could it be that they are 'taking up the slack' for the missing bees? Fern would be interested to know whether anyone else has noticed this.



What do you think ? I seem to have noticed very good numbers of hoverflies this year. Why not email Fern with your observations, and even any numerical data that may be out there.

New Gardening Leaflets

Sophie Thomas, Invasive Plants Officer Plantlife



Plantlife and the RHS have joined forces to create a series of booklets on Gardening, Landscaping and Keeping ponds and aquaria without harmful invasive plants. Invasive plants have sometimes been used in the past for those difficult areas of gardening – exposed patches or where a bare wall needs to be covered quickly, for example. Meanwhile plants for other aspects of gardening, like summer bedding plants, are unlikely to be invasive. The booklet covers those areas of the garden where, traditionally, invasive plants have most been used.

The guides can help gardeners, landscapers and pond/aquarium keepers choose plants that are less likely to cause problems to the environment should they escape into the wild.

Please note, the booklets are not designed to be Wildlife Gardening booklets, but are offering readers plants to try *in place of* invasive plants. Plants included have been chosen as they perform the same, or similar, 'jobs' to specific invasive plants.

Electronic versions of each booklet can be downloaded from:

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/invasive_plants/native_alternatives/

The work was funded by Defra, the Scottish Government and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

(Lots of) News from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Natalie Rogers Wildlife Information Officer

Wild About Gardens

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (H&IOW WT) have launched a new award scheme to find out how wildlife friendly Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's gardens are. So if you have a wildlife friendly garden, the Trust would like to hear from you.

Our gardens are extremely important for wildlife, not only can they provide food and shelter for a huge range of plants and animals, but they can form a natural "bridge" between built up and open areas which allow wildlife to move between them relatively easily. Gardens can also provide particular habitats that may be missing in your local area such as ponds and suitable hibernation or nesting sites. Even a small garden or window box can make a real difference for local wildlife and there are lots of simple things you can do in your garden to make it more wildlife friendly. You can plant some nectar rich wildflowers, create a compost heap, put up some bird feeders or build a pond.

Since the launch of the scheme last November, 110 awards have been sent out. The scheme has captured the interest of a range of different groups including residents, schools, a garden centre and even a railway station. The winning gardens each month are featured on our wildlife friendly award winner webpage. Our mobile wildlife garden has also been attracting lots of wildlife and attention at key events throughout the summer.



Do you have a wildlife friendly garden?

This scheme by H&IOW WT requires that you can demonstrate 10 features from the list below, with 2 from each of the categories; food, water, shelter, sustainability.

- Food: Bird feeding station, nectar rich plants for bees and butterflies, thistle or teasel for seed eating birds, night time nectar sources for moths, shrubs and bushes with berries, herb garden.
- Water: Wildlife pond (no fish), bird bath, water butt, boggy area
- Shelter: Bird nest box, log pile, hedgehog box, native hedge, mini wildflower meadow, unmown area of long grass.
- Sustainability: Compost heap or bin, wildlife friendly pest control, using a watering can not a hose, peat-free compost, drought resistant plants, green roof on your shed.

To apply for your award or find out more about each feature and plants that will attract wildlife, please visit our website www.hwt.org.uk email wildlifegardening@hwt.org.uk

Demonstration Gardens

Hambrooks garden design and landscaping have teamed up with H&IOW WT to create two stunning demonstration gardens at their garden centre in Titchfield, Fareham. The gardens contain wildlife friendly plants and features designed to create a haven for local wildlife. Both gardens have also qualified for the Wildlife Trust's wildlife friendly garden award.



Hambrooks is the first business in the county to qualify for the wildlife award scheme which was launched in November last year. The scheme aims to encourage Hampshire and Isle of Wight residents to make simple changes in their local area for the benefit of wildlife. These changes include planting nectar rich wildflowers, putting up a bird nest box, starting a compost heap, feeding the birds or even digging a pond.

H&IOW WT's Wildlife Information Officer, Natalie Rogers says "It has been great for the Wildlife Trust to work closely with a local business to promote wildlife friendly gardening to a wider audience. We hope that visitors to the Hambrooks centre will be inspired to make simple changes in their own gardens for the benefit of local wildlife."

Hambrooks Garden Centre manager Kevin Clare comments "We are delighted to receive this award for one of our show gardens as it supports our aim to help raise awareness of the ecological importance of wildlife gardens to our customers."

To find out more go to www.hwt.org.uk or email wildlifegardening@hwt.org.uk.

Thanks to all contributors

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