



# WILDLIFE GARDENING FORUM

## E-newsletter: April 2016

[www.wlgf.org](http://www.wlgf.org)

@WLGForum



### Headlines

#### Do you have experience of which wildlife visits which garden plants?

In 2016 the Wildlife Gardening Forum is running a project to pool that knowledge, and we need your help. There are all sorts of lists out there, but few based on such a collaborative approach.

To take part, you will rate a list of plants for a range of wildlife based on your own first-hand experience. It will take you as little as 30 minutes to complete, although there is the option to make more first-hand observations in gardens between now and autumn.

Together, we can compile the most definitive database to share with gardeners. See page 2 for more background, and email [survey@wlgf.org](mailto:survey@wlgf.org) for full instructions.

#### WLGf Facebook and Twitter put on growth spurt

Our [Facebook group](#) has more than doubled since January to over 400 members, and we now have over 200 Twitter followers [here](#).

#### Next WLGf Conference

Put it in your diaries: Weds 22nd June, Crewe (yes, we'll be out of London and very close to the station, so hopefully accessible for many). Theme: **Wildlife Gardening & Education**. (Booking nearer the time).

Page	Contents
2	<a href="#">Forum News</a>
3	<a href="#">Events and calendar</a>
4	<a href="#">Wildlife Gardening Research</a>
5	<a href="#">Wildlife Gardening and Citizen Science</a>
6	<a href="#">Wildlife gardening and education</a>
7	<a href="#">Wildlife Gardening Policy</a>
7	<a href="#">Garden wildlife</a>
8	<a href="#">Wildlife Gardening in practice</a>

Wildlife Gardening Forum Survey 2016

#### Which garden plants are best for wildlife?

Share your experience and help us compile the best advice for gardeners.



*You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of the Wildlife Gardening Forum. If you would like to be removed from our membership list and cease receiving this newsletter, please email [members@wlgf.org](mailto:members@wlgf.org).*

## Forum News

### 2016 WLGf Best Garden Plants for Wildlife Project

As announced on page 1, the Forum is undertaking a project this year which we think will break new ground. There are lists aplenty out there of recommended 'plants for wildlife', but rarely stating where that information comes from. We know that many of you have great experience of which garden flowers are visited by wildlife, and we want to gather and share that first-hand experience knowledge.

If you'd like to take part, we will send you a list of plants that you will rate, based solely on your personal experience and not on 'received wisdom'. For many of you, you will just need to trawl your memory, but you might also like to make some extra observations this summer.

You will choose which group or groups of wildlife you want to tell us about; for example, you might just want to share your experience of nectaring butterflies, or you may have experience of everything from moth caterpillars to plants visited by pollinating beetles.

We estimate the survey will take you between 1-2 hours to complete, depending on how many groups of wildlife you choose to rate, plus any extra time you spend this summer making extra observations.

To register to take part, or for more information, email Adrian Thomas and Nicky Hewitt at [survey@wlgf.org](mailto:survey@wlgf.org) and we will send you full instructions.

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### The best wildlife-friendly gardens to visit

For the WLGf website, we are compiling a list of the best wildlife-friendly gardens the public can visit for inspiration. They could be public gardens open throughout much of the year, or gardens open for NGS or other such schemes for limited periods only. They do not have to be called a 'Wildlife Garden' - as we all know, all sorts of gardens can be wildlife-friendly whether it is in the name or not.



RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden

So far, five have been suggested:

- **Briarcroft, Cleveland.** Open for the National Gardens Scheme on 5 June 2016.
- **The Old Vicarage, Shaftesbury, Dorset.** Open for the National Gardens Scheme on 17 April and 22 May 2016.
- **Ivy House Garden, Piddletrenthide, Dorset.** Open for the National Gardens Scheme on 17 April, 20 April, 1 May and 2 May 2016.
- **Castell Cwrt, Abergavenny, Gwent.** Open for the National Gardens Scheme on 8 May 2016.
- **RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden, Suffolk.** Open 27 March to 3 November every day, 10.30 - 16.30.

Over to you - you must know of more. Send details of those you are aware of, including a brief description and details of why they are especially wildlife-friendly, to [news@wlgf.org](mailto:news@wlgf.org).

## We're open for questions!

The Forum has access to experts in most aspects of wildlife gardening. If you have a question - or want to voice an opinion - why not do so through this newsletter? Email [news@wlgf.org](mailto:news@wlgf.org).

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## WLGf website overhaul

The focus over the last couple of years has been populating our website. We are now working to revamp its appearance so that it is better looking, easier to navigate and better for handheld devices. We hope to have everything transferred into the new format by autumn 2016.

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## Forum membership continues to rise and now stands at 818

Remember, membership is free - if you have received this newsletter directly you are a member. Do forward this newsletter to anyone you know who might be interested; to join, they just need to send an email to [member@wlgf.org](mailto:member@wlgf.org).

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## Send us your news and events

Remember to send in any news items or events for the calendar to [news@wlgf.org](mailto:news@wlgf.org).

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## Events and calendar

### 2016

- Sun 1 May: [International Dawn Chorus Day](#)
  - 1-7 May [Hedgehog Awareness Week](#)
  - Mon 9 to Wed 11 June: [National Moth Night](#) (theme: Hawkmoths)
  - 4-5 June 2016 [National Garden Bioblitz](#)
  - **WLGf Conference, 22 June Crewe: Wildlife Gardening & Education**
  - Mon 20 to Sun 26 June: Pollinator Week and [National Insect Week](#)
  - 1 & 2 July 2016 [Workshop: Determining the Most Attractive Plants for Bees and other Flower Visitors](#).  
How to help bees and other flower visiting insects by planting the right flowers. The Laboratory of Apiculture & Social Insects, University of Sussex, Brighton
  - Saturday 2 July: [National Meadows Day](#)
  - Friday 15 July to Sun 7 August: [Big Butterfly Count](#)
  - 23-31 July 2016 Dragonfly Week (including Dragonfly Day on Sunday 24 July). The British Dragonfly Society's annual flagship, with dragonfly themed events across the UK.
  - 24-30 October: RHS/Wildlife Trusts [Wild About Gardens Week](#)
  - **WLGf Conference 23rd Nov Natural History Museum: Wildlife Gardening across Europe**
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Broad-bodied Chasers - one of the highlights of Dragonfly Week

# Wildlife Gardening Research

## Wildlife and gardening – a recipe for happiness

Gardening came sixth and nature watching eighth in a list of the things that are sure to make us happy, according to a study by the University of Sussex and the London School of Economics. More than 20,000 people participated in the study, which involved them being ‘pinged’ on an app at various times of day and asked to record their happiness levels and what they were doing.

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## Ash crisis - and maybe a ray of hope

A review of the evidence surrounding the threats to the Ash tree in the UK and Europe makes for grim reading (*Journal of Ecology*). The paper, led by Dr Peter Thomas of Keele University (see [here](#) for their press release), concludes that it will most likely be "eliminated", due not only to the fungal disease Ash-dieback but also the invasive Emerald Ash Borer Beetle. The latter is Asian in origin and is spreading west from Russia and may have reached Sweden; the larvae bore into the wood and kill the trees.



As well as the 157,000 hectares of Ash woodland in Britain, there are thought to be a further 12 million trees across the country, including of course many in gardens.

In one small piece of good news for the Ash, researchers at the University of York and the John Innes Centre have found genetic markers which can be used to predict trees that are resistant to Ash Die-back (full press release [here](#)). Given that Ash trees are currently unavailable for sale to gardeners because of the risk of the disease, this gives hope that there will be a way to replace lost trees in the future. The innovative approach may also offer a way to screen other tree species at a time when so many trees are threatened by different pathogens. The results were published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

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## How good are cities for bees?

In a two year study in Lyon, France, scientists assessed changes in the abundance, species richness, and composition of wild bee community along an urbanization gradient. It found that greater the area of impervious surface (what we might call ‘hard landscaping’), the fewer bees there were, and yet species richness reached a maximum at an intermediate (50%) proportion of impervious surface.

It also found that the structure of the community (ie the suite of bee species that were found) also changed along the urbanization gradient with more parasitic species in sites with an intermediate proportion of impervious surface, and more cavity-nesting species and long-tongued species in sites with intermediate or higher proportion of impervious surface.



A third of all of France's bee species were found in the study, showing just how rich urban environments can be. In fact, sites with an intermediate level of urbanization were the most speciose ones, including greater proportion of cleptoparasitic species. The results were published [here](#) in PLOS ONE.

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### Plants for Pollinators Pilot Study

From December 2015-January 2016, the RHS ran a pilot survey into which pollinator-friendly plants are grown in UK gardens. Aimed at people with private gardens and planting areas (including hanging baskets, window boxes and potted plants) rather than community or public gardens, a total of 300 people took part. The pilot is informing the development of a larger survey which is due to be launched in summer 2016.

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## Wildlife Gardening and Citizen Science

### Help solve the mystery of the UK's back garden butterflies

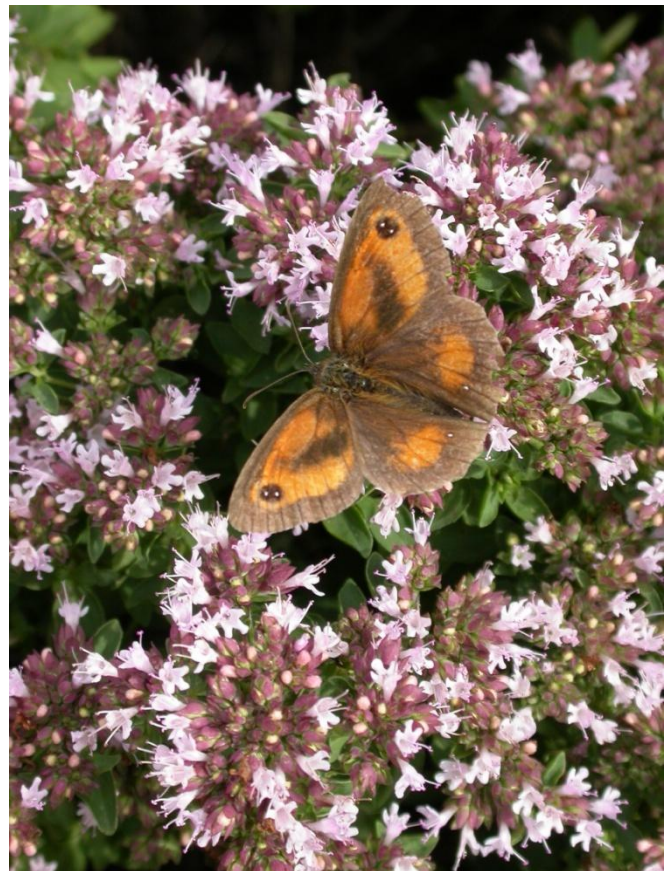
Butterfly Conservation's newly launched Garden Butterfly Survey will attempt to lift the lid on how garden butterflies are faring.

The survey will reveal garden butterfly declines and increases, how they are affected by climate change, what plants they really prefer and the best size and location for a butterfly-friendly garden.

The UK's estimated 22 million gardens represent an area roughly the size of Somerset, and at a time when butterflies face unprecedented threat, they offer a potentially huge and vitally important habitat.

The Garden Butterfly Survey will encourage participants to count garden butterflies every month of the year as climate change has seen butterfly flight periods change with some species now flying into the winter.

To take part in the Garden Butterfly Survey visit [www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org](http://www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org).



Gatekeeper, which has shown alarming declines in recent year after appearing to be expanding its range rapidly northwards

# Wildlife gardening and education

## WLGf, Trailblazer and the Horticulture Apprenticeship: training professional gardeners

Last year, Rose de Falbe, of the Forum's Education and Training Working Group, noticed articles in Horticulture Week about the upcoming Government initiative to create millions of world class Apprenticeship places in England. The group responsible for putting together the content, structure and assessment of the Horticulture Apprenticeship is known as 'Trailblazer Hort/Landscape sub-Group'.

Rose purposefully sought out the Association of Professional Landscapers last year and the contacts she was given led to the Forum being invited to have a voice in the process.

Sally Cunningham from Ryton Organic Gardens and I accompanied Rose to the meeting on 1 December 2015 at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire to discuss the content of the new Standard for the Level 2 and Level 3 Apprenticeship. Our WLGf input gave weight to the inclusion of compost in with Soils and Growing Media and making 'Protection of Environment' and 'Protection of Biodiversity' part of the core knowledge required for Level 3. We also contributed to discussion about Environmental Best Practice, Use of Pesticides, Pest Control Methods, Plant Identification and Tree Health.

The meetings are ongoing. I attended on 1 Feb 2016 where the focus was on methods of assessment. However, the issue of a skills gap in Conservation at this level did come up. There is more we can do; we can keep nudging decision making in favour of wildlife.

It was great to feel that the WLGf had contributed positively to this new Standard, potentially influencing the training of thousands of new horticulturalists. The new Standard will only touch the surface of issues in Wildlife Conservation and Gardening as a craft but it is a start.

Being a member of the WLGf can be more than just knowledge sharing; it can mean making a real difference if you spot an opportunity to get involved when it arises.

*Lucy Hartley*

# Wildlife Gardening Policy

## Government produces revised green infrastructure planning guidance

The Department for Communities and Local Government, working with the Green Infrastructure Partnership, has now published revised green infrastructure planning guidance as part of the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for England.

The new guidance:

- Has its own section, within the 'Natural Environment' section, rather than being subsumed under 'Biodiversity'.
- Is more comprehensive than previously, although still concise.
- Includes two-way links to other sections of the PPG dealing with 'open space'; 'public health'; 'local plans and climate change'.
- States clearly that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) can be used to fund green infrastructure.
- Has the legal weight of being properly included within the PPG.

You can see the new guidance [here](#).

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## Garden wildlife

### Youth award for garden wildlife talent

This year's Gilbert White youth award for recording terrestrial and freshwater wildlife has been made to 12-year old James' James McCulloch. With a precocious skill in wildlife identification, contributing over 2200 observations and over 2500 identifications on iSpot since December 2012, he has an ambition to share as many species in his garden as possible through short [YouTube videos](#). You can also check out his blog [here](#).

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### Guest entry from Martin Angel: Garden arrivals during Saharan dust storms

16th December 2015 saw the arrival of a major Saharan dust event in the UK. With it came the largest recorded invasion of immigrant insects in December - mostly moths, which included at least one species never before recorded here. In my garden I trapped a Levant Blackneck moth *Tathorhynchus exsuccata* - the first ever record in Surrey.

Most of these dust storms originate in the Bodele Depression dried lake bed in the desert near Lake Chad. The dust clouds can be tracked by satellites, and usually move all the way across the Atlantic to the Caribbean where they can ground air traffic. Ecologically they are highly important in providing the phosphates to the Amazonian rain forests that keep them growing.

When they get caught up in unusual weather patterns they move northwards to the UK. Here



Levant Blackneck (Martin Angel)

they can cover our cars with reddish dust, reduce visibility and give asthma sufferers problems. Warnings are issued on-line by DEFRA, but not as far as I can ascertain by the NHS!

I witnessed such an event off the Cape Verde Islands in November 1997 when the decks of the research ship I was on became covered overnight with hundreds of thousands of insects - mostly plant bugs, locusts, ground crickets, dragonflies and a few moths and butterflies.

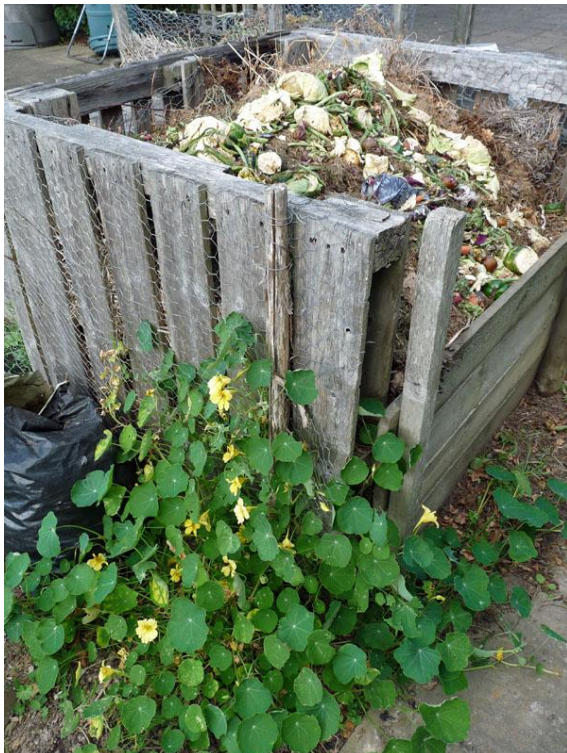
However, not all of these dust events are associated with influxes of exotic insects, but if you can keep an eye out for unusual species in your gardens especially if you live near the south coast by occasional inspection of the [forecasting website](#). You can learn a lot more about these events by searching the web for 'Saharan dust'. In addition to bringing in some unusual exotics they may also import some pests into your garden.

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## Wildlife Gardening in practice

### Pallets: are they safe for garden use?

Wooden pallets are often recommended for reuse and recycling projects in the garden, but are they safe to use or have they been treated with chemicals that you would not want to let loose around your wildlife?



The company 1001Pallets has investigated the issue and produced a summary of their findings [here](#); their investigation was mainly for craft purposes but the advice feels pertinent to garden situations.

In short:

- Avoid pallets which are stained with unknown spillages

For clean pallets

- Ones with no stamp or mark are 'national' pallets that will have been used in the UK only. They are probably safe but it is not guaranteed.
- Ones with a stamp are international pallets. Only use those with the IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) logo.
- All pallets are treated so that invasive insects or plant diseases aren't conveyed. You may also see a treatment code: [HT] = Heat treatment, [MB] = Methyl Bromide, [DB] = Debarked, [KD] = Kiln Dried.

- [MB] is methyl bromide fumigation, a powerful pesticide linked to human health problems and ozone layer depletion. Avoid!
  - 1001Pallets don't advise the use of coloured pallets as they may have traces of formaldehyde and other resins, and it is possible they may have been used to transport chemicals.
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## Growing season lengthens

The growing season for UK plants has extended by a month over recent decades due to climate change. The figures, compiled by the Met Office show that the number of days per year when temperatures are warm enough for plants to grow was 280 days over the past decade, 29 days longer than the average for the 60s, 70s and 80s.

The average start of the growing season, which are taken to be the first five-day spell when temperatures average at least 5C, shifted from 20 March during 1961-90 to 27 February. At the end of the season, the last such five-day period moved from 25 November to 2 December.

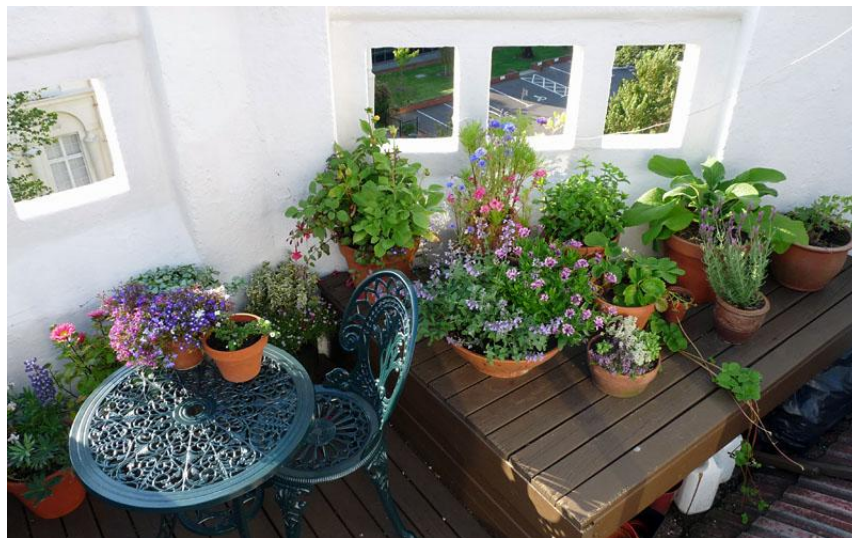
The longest growing season was 2014 when the growing season lasted 336 days.

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## Oslo creates bumblebee highway

In Norway, where six of the 35 species of bumblebee are close to extinction, a bee-friendly corridor has been created through the city with pollen stations every 250 metres. The Oslo Garden Society, headed by Tonje Waaktaar Gamst, has placed flowerpots on rooftops and balconies along an east-west route through the city.

The initiative sees environmental organisations, the public and companies working alongside the local authority. To help, the organisation BiBy (Bee Town) has created an app which allows the public to see the 'grey areas' – long stretches with no food for bees – which then acts as an encouragement for people to fill the gaps.



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*The Wildlife Gardening Forum is a consortium of the UK's leading wildlife, conservation, gardening and horticultural organisations, from both the private and the public sectors. We now have over 800 members. Formed in 2005, our core aim is to help gardeners and decision-makers understand just how important our gardens are for wildlife.*

Newsletter compiled by Adrian Thomas. All photos by Adrian unless stated.