

Planting for Pollinators & Wildlife

In addition to many books, YouTube offers a great many resources and one of the best is a little series of videos from Joel Ashton. There are many of the series and if you go into Youtube and search for Joel Ashton 'how to wild your garden', you'll find much to help you on your way. Dave Goulson is also a great resource on YouTube.

Books

- **'The Garden Jungle'**, gardening to save the planet', Prof. Dave Goulson
- **'How to create an eco-garden'**, John Walker
- **'Wildflowers'**, Sarah Raven . Essentially an encyclopaedia - this a brilliant resource for figuring out what will work best on your soil/environment.
- **'Making a wildflower meadow'**, the definitive guide to grassland gardening', Pam Lewis (wish I'd had this when we first tackled our meadow!)
- **'Naturalistic planting design'**, Nigel Dunnett
- **'Cultivating Chaos'**, how to enrich landscapes with self-seeding plants', Jonas Reif, Christian Kress & Jürgen Becker

Other Educational Resources

- Plantlife www.plantlife.org.uk
- Garden Organic www.gardenorganic.org.uk
- The Soil Association www.soilassociation.org



Making your garden a riot of colour and variety will really help all pollinators. There's debate about sticking only to native species, which would disappoint many of us when it came to designing perennial borders, but Prof. Goulson observes ***"It seems intuitive that planting natives is better than planting non-natives, but I don't see any reason to get obsessive about it"***.

Heartening advice, but do avoid any kind of 'double bloom' as they have fewer anthers so insects and bees find these very difficult to penetrate.

Don't cut back herbaceous growth in Autumn. Tidiness removes the protection offered to caterpillars and moth pupae, along with spiders and all sorts of other beneficial creepy crawlies. Standing dead herbaceous matter looks stunning when frosted or sparkling with dewy cobwebs and the dead matter acts as root protection.



PERFECT FOR POLLINATORS

Some of the plants on this list will also help **moths**, as will valerian, catmint, evening primrose, sweet rocket, jasmine & honeysuckle.

- **Aconites (family Ranunculaceae):** with their dainty little yellow flowers, these are one of the earliest nectar providers.
- **Bluebells (Hyacinthoides):** avoid the Spanish variety at all costs as they are viscous spreaders.
- **Bush vetch (Vicia sepium):** a member of pea family, native climbing perennial, small purple flowers and often found in wildflower meadows.
- **Catmint (Nepeta racemose):** lilac flowers, Nepeta. N. faassenii 'Six Hills Giant' is great for long-tongued bees. Cottage Garden classic and cats also love it!
- **Comfrey (Symphytum officinale 'Bocking 14'):** hardy perennial, tall (1.5m) so great at back of border, flowers May to August. Can also be chopped down regularly to make a great compost. CB: you can also soak it in water and let it break down to make a 'fertiliser' but be warned – it's smelly – so place the tub out of the way somewhere!
- **Cyclamen (family Primulaceae):** great Spring nectar source.
- **Dahlia 'Bishop of Llandaff':** deep red flowers from July. Needs lifting or mulching in winter if on heavy soil. Other dahlias are good but avoid 'cactus' or 'pompom' varieties or any other kind of plant with a double-headed flower; the bees can't access the pollen easily.
- **Field Scabious (Knautia arvensis):** many species available but this native one is good. Knautia Macedonia is a superb addition to any perennial border and is a super cut flower.
- **(Meadow) Cranesbill (Geranium pratense):** most hardy geraniums are great for bees. This is the typical wildflower meadow variety. For perennial borders and fantastic ground cover, Geranium 'Roxanne' is super; it tumbles well over raised beds and provides great ground cover on the flat - purple blue flowers from July to first frost.

- **Giant Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum* 'Blackadder', Blue Fortune' & 'Blue Boa'**: needs well-drained soil so no good for our clay. Grows to about 1m with spikes of blue flowers in the summer.



- **Lavender (*Lavendula*)**: lavender is a tricky choice and needs good maintenance in terms of rigorous pruning. Avoid Spanish lavender at all costs and French Lavender isn't as hardy as English lavender. There are many, many varieties of Lavender but not all are hardy and be aware, there's a difference between 'frost hardy' and hardy, with hardy being the sturdiest and often able to survive in -15C. 'Hidcote' Blue' is a super example, average height (45-60cm) and lasts for 20 years if well maintained and not on clay. Visit the website for Downterry Nursery (National lavender collection) and research what variety you want before trotting off to the garden centre and being overwhelmed.., or buying something that won't survive winter. Downterry is also a great place for bulk buying (www.downterry-nursery.co.uk). Downterry also stock a wide variety of Rosemary.
- **Lungwort (*Pulmonaria* 'Blue Ensign', 'Trevi Fountain'**: provides early spring nectar. Easy to grow and happy in semi shade or full sun.
- **Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*)**: easy, happy in pots or soil. Native. Avoid variegated and golden varieties. Does self-seed and needs some management.
- **Michaelmas Daisies**: great as an Autumn nectar source.
- **Plume thistle (*Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpurem')**: great for male bumblebees in high summer. Not spiny but does spread and take over so needs management.
- **Pussy Willow (*Salix caprea*)**: native, growing to 10m+. Best to grow a male variety if possible as the males produce pollen and some nectar, whereas the female only produces nectar. Dwarf & weeping varieties available for smaller gardens.
- **Sicilian honey garlic (*Allium siculum*)**: all Alliums (including chives) are pretty fantastic for bees as the pollen is very accessible, but Prof. Goulsen recommends this as the best. Claire Benn has a wholesale account with De Jager bulbs, so contact her if you're looking to buy Alliums (or indeed any bulbs) in bulk.

- **Sneezewort (*Helenium* 'Moorheim Beauty')**: this is a super variety. Gorgeous rust orange colour, keeps going if you dead-head. Happy on free-draining sand but may not survive heavy clay.
- **Snowdrops (*Galanthus*)**: great as a spring nectar source.
- **Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus* subsp. *Britannicus*)**: Prof. Goulson recommends this variety as the best for pollinators. A low-growing, rambling perennial that's happy in a pot or as ground cover.
- **Viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)**: prefers sandy, free-draining soil. A lovely plant gets to about 1m and the flowers are a glorious blue, followed by an elegant seed pod.

Chemically-Toxic Plants

Be careful about where you buy your plants. Prof. Dave Goulson was suspicious about the slightly unnatural "rude health" of plants obtained in some garden centres. He decided to undertake a study and purchased across about 6 garden centres (including places such as B&Q). He had heard rumours that the greenhouses the plants were reared in relied heavily on the use of pesticides. He raised funds to conduct a scientific analysis with depressing and disturbing results: most of the plants contained a cocktail of pesticides (usually fungicides and insecticides).

Only two out of the 29 plants tested contained no pesticides. 70% contained neonicotinoids, pesticides that are notorious for their harmful effect on bees and for having a long persistence in the environment.

(Organic) Plant & Seed Suppliers

There are a couple of local nurseries to consider, specifically:

- **Hope Nurseries** is now behind the burial ground in Betchworth. No website but they do have a Facebook page.
- **Hardy Geraniums**, Betchworth; located behind the cattle sheds to the rear of the graveyard.
- **Buckland Nurseries**: a family business on the A25 between Betchworth & Reigate. Chemical-free and environmentally conscious.

When doing an online web search for organic, pesticide-free plant suppliers, be a bit careful as although this does bring up names of organic suppliers, it brings up non-organic ones too. The following list was sourced through Gardens Illustrated magazine and most will supply through mail or online ordering, although a couple don't.

In future, we need to consider the collection of seeds for seed swapping and also advise each other when we're lifting and dividing perennials so the 'excess' stock can be planted elsewhere rather than being disposed of.

- **Delfland (online available)**
- A long-standing nursery that produces vegetable plug plants for farms, smallholders and allotment associations but also offers smaller quantities for

gardeners. Tel 01354 740553, www.organicplants.co.uk for small packs for gardeners, delfland.co.uk. for plants by the tray.

- **Edibleculture (no mail or online ordering, but Faversham isn't too far)**
- The nursery offers a wide range of perennials, edibles, trees and house plants, peat and pesticide-free. **The Horticultural Unit, The Abbey School, Faversham, Kent ME13 8RZ. Tel 01795 537662, edibleculture.co.uk.**
- **Edulis (mail order available)**
- Known for its excellent selection of rare plants, and plants for sustainable, edible food growing. **The Walled Garden, Tidmarsh Lane, Pangbourne, Berkshire RG8 8HT. Tel 01635 578113/07802 812781, edulis.co.uk.** Mail order available.
- **Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants (mail order available)**
- An award-winning nursery with a fantastic selection of plants that is now moving towards a more eco-friendly approach. **Priory Lane Nursery, Freefolk Priors, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7FA. Tel 01256 896533, hardysplants.co.uk.** Mail order available. Opening times vary through the year, please check before travel.
- **Jekka's (can order online but you have to collect)**
- Home to the largest collection of culinary herbs in the UK, Jekka McVicar's herb farm was established more than 30 years ago as a resource for herbs for food, health and well-being. **Rose Cottage, Shellards Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3SY. Tel 01454 418878, jekkass.com.** Herbs available to buy online and then collected from farm – or purchased at open days or masterclasses, see website for calendar of events.
- **John Cullen Gardens (mail order available)**
- This nursery specialises in scented and edible plants, and plants for pollinators, so good to know that the nursery is chemical free with no neonicotinoids used on its plants. **Eagle Lodge, Archers Lane, Algakirk, Lincolnshire PE20 2AG, Tel 01205 460567, johncullengardens.com.**
- **Lovain Nurseries, Peacehaven (no mail order or online, you have to visit).** Soil Association certified, large range of plants, seeds, vegetables etc.
- **66 Telscombe Road, Peacehaven, E. Sussex BN10 7UB**
www.louvainnurseries.co.uk
- **Organic Bulbs Ltd (online available)**
- Small but perfectly formed selection chosen by designers Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt. All bulbs have been grown without chemicals or pesticides and have been chosen as suitable for naturalizing. **Tel 01373 888720, organicbulbs.com.**
- **Organic Gardening Catalogue**
- Extensive catalogue of organic gardening supplies available to view via printed catalogue or online. **Tel 0344 967 0330, organiccatalogue.com.**
- **Peat Free Plants (mail order and online shopping available)**
- A small, family-run nursery, certified organic by the Soil Association and offering herbaceous perennials, alpines, bulbs and its own organic compost for sale on site or via mail order. **Peat Free Plants, Caves Folly Nurseries, Evendine Lane, Colwall, Worcestershire WR13 6DX. Tel 01684 540631, peatfreeplants.org.uk.**
- **Penlan Perennials (mail order available)**
- All the plants from this nursery in west Wales are grown in peat-free soil to organic standards. **Landre, Drefach, Llanybydder, Ceredigion SA40 9YD. Tel 01570 480097/07984 880241, penlanperennials.co.uk.**

- **Plants, Shoots and Leaves (mail order available)**
- This Scottish nursery offers a range of unusual and rare, hardy perennials while specialising in epimediums and hardy geraniums. **Dovecot Bungalow, Haddington, East Lothian EH41 4HA. Tel 01620 823536, plantsshootsandleaves.co.uk. Mail order available.**
- **Poyntzfield Herb Nursery (mail order available)**
- A well-established nursery that is situated on the Black Isle, just north of Inverness, and which has been growing herbs organically and biodynamically since 1976. **Black Isle, By Dingwall, Ross & Cromarty EV7 8LX. Tel 01381 610352, poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk. Mail order available. Open Monday to Saturday, 1-5pm, April to September, and Sundays (May to August), 1-5pm.**
- **Waddow Lodge Garden (mail order available)**
- From his own garden in Lancashire, experienced nurseryman Peter Foley offers a range of perennials for sale and mail order all produced with an environmental approach. **Waddow Lodge, Waddington, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 3HQ. Tel 01200 429145, gardentalks.co.uk.**
- **Walcot Organic Nursery (mail order and online available)**
- Set up in 2000, Walcot has only ever specialised in organic fruit trees, starting out with a selection of cultivars that had been grown in and around the Vale of Evesham for years – long before the use of pesticides. **Walcot Lane, Drakes Broughton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2AL. Tel 01905 841587, www.walcotnursery.co.uk**

Organic Seed Suppliers

Organic seeds are becoming more easily available. It's always worth searching for options with your regular seed company of choice, or here's a list of companies that are already offering good options:

- **Mr Fothergills Seeds** Tel 0333 777 3936, mr-fothergills.co.uk – many popular choices.
- **Real Seeds** Tel 01239 821107, realseeds.co.uk – open pollinated seeds.
- **Seed Co-operative** Tel 01775 840592, seedcooperative.org.uk – open pollinated varieties adapted to organic growing.
- **Suttons** Tel 0344 326 2200, suttons.co.uk – 27 new varieties added to its range this year.
- **Tamar Organics** Tel 01579 371087, tamarorganics.co.uk – vegetables, herbs, flowers, green manures and more.

Blooms for Bees www.bloomsforbees.co.uk

An interesting little website. Here is their list of Soil Association organic approved raisers/suppliers:

- **Caves Folly Nurseries**, Colwall, Worcestershire – cavesfolly.com
Herbs and herbaceous perennials
- **Cheer's Nurseries Ltd**, Boston, Lincolnshire – www.cheersnurseries.co.uk
Herbs and vegetables
- **Brunswick Organic Nursery**, Bishopthorpe, York – www.brunswickyork.org.uk
Herbs and vegetables

- **Poyntzfield Herb Nursery**, Ross & Cromarty, Scotland – www.poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk
Herbs and shrubs
- **Delfland Nurseries**, March, Cambridgeshire – www.organicplants.co.uk
Herbs, vegetables and salad crops
- **Lakehayes Nursery** (Bee Happy Plants and Seeds), South Chard, Somerset – www.beehappyplants.co.uk

Perennial plants and shrubs

- Growers Organics, Yealmpton, Devon – www.growersorganics.com
Vegetables, salads, herbs, fruit and ornamentals
- Plant Raisers Ltd, Howden, East Yorkshire – www.plantraisers.co.uk
Glasshouse crops (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers)
- Tamar Organics, Launceston, Cornwall – www.tamarorganics.co.uk
Vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers
- Wessex Plants (1988) Ltd, nr. Bristol, Somerset – www.wessexplants.co.uk
Herbs, vegetables, brassicas and alliums
- Walcot Nursery, Pershore, Worcestershire – walcotnursery.co.uk
Top fruit and soft fruit
- Herons Folly, Mayfield, East Sussex – www.héronsfollygarden.co.uk
Apples
- Welsh Fruit Stocks, Kington, Powys – www.welshfruitstocks.co.uk
Soft fruit

Wildflower Seeds

- Naturescape: www.naturescape.co.uk
- British Wildflower Plants: www.wildflowers.co.uk
- John Chambers Wildflower Seeds; sold through the Plantlife shop, www.plantlife.org.uk (CB is a member of Plantlife and can order for you).