HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE!

We got off to a good start in 2014 with our pollinator planting in schools. Teachers, parents and pupils dug and raked the soil, sowed the seed, watered and waited for the plants to appear. Some had more success than others! However we all learned a lot from the experience. So well done everyone! And a big thank you to all the schools that took part in this first project.

Gilwern School had an ambitious project to sow quite a large plot with wild flower seeds. The pupils worked very hard and they were rewarded with a good show of annual flowers. The green leaves visible on the plot now promise to produce a colourful display of perennials in the summer of 2015. They topped up their patch with extra seed in the autumn.

TALKS ABOUT POLLINATING INSECTS

Members of the BfM Schools Team gave illustrated talks to small groups of pupils in several schools in 2014 and we will be providing this free service again in 2015. The talks have received very positive feedback from staff and pupils. Contact us if you would like to book a presentation for your pupils in the second half of the Spring Term or the Summer Term.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2015?

FREE SEEDS AND/OR PLANTS FOR YOUR SCHOOL!

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire (BfM) has kindly been donated seeds by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the Grow Wild Project www.growwilduk.com. We also have funding to buy more seeds and/or plants. So YOUR SCHOOL could have a lovely display and lots of pollinators visiting in 2015! Please get in touch as soon as possible if your school would like seeds or plants to be used in any (or all!) of the following ways:-

1. Wildflower seeds to start new wildflower beds or to top up existing ones

Whether or not your school took part last year you can create a new wildflower pollinator patch this year from scratch, or you can top up your existing wildflower patch with some
extra seed. Find details about the seed mixes - Special Cornfield Mix plus Wild pollen and nectar flowers on www.emorsegateseeds.com

2. WOW factor mixed seeds for cultivated areas

Did you see the fabulous flowers on roundabouts and verges planted by MCC in the county last summer? Didn’t they look stunning? And they are good for all sorts of pollinators! Lots of people have asked us where to get hold of these seeds so we thought we would give schools the chance to recreate that look by giving you the same seed mixes to sow in your school gardens. Pollinating insects are attracted to all sorts of garden flowers as well as wild flowers. These mixes contain wild and cultivated flowers so you will get more colour and a longer flowering period than with just wild flowers. But of course that means these seeds are not suitable for “wild” areas. The seeds, together with details about how to prepare, sow and maintain your flower bed will be available by the end of March, the perfect time to sow them.

3. Create a herb garden

Your pollinating insects will make a beeline for this! A bed of scented herbs such as lavender, fennel, thyme, marjoram, hyssop, borage, sage, chives, rosemary and mint will not only create a haven for insects but many of them can be used in cooking. You could plant them in a small patch, a raised bed or a container. Most of them are perennial so they are low maintenance – an important consideration for busy teachers and pupils!

More details about all these projects will be sent out later via email and will be posted on the website. If you would like to grow more wild flowers, grow a WOW border and/or start a herb garden remember to make sure your bed or container is in a sunny spot near a tap. Let us know the dimensions of your plot or container to help us order the right amounts of seed and plants.

IMPROVE THE HABITAT FOR BEES AND OTHER INSECTS

Remember also that providing shelter and nesting sites for insects is as important as providing food. Try to leave some areas of grass uncut, perhaps around the edges of fields,
or build log piles in a shady spot. Native hedges provide excellent food and lodging for insects. You could even try your hand at making a bee hotel (diameter of tubes 5mm – 10mm) for small mason bees to nest in. Bees also need water to drink so a shallow bowl filled with water and pebbles (so the insects don’t drown) will create the perfect insect bar!

**INFORMATION SHEETS FOR TEACHERS**

Later this term we will be posting information about pollinators and plants to support them for you to download from our Website, plus links to other useful sites. Let us know if there is anything specific you need and we will try to help.

**CONTACTS**

Contact your local organizer to order seeds/plants and/or for advice and more details:-

Abergavenny & district: Sue Harrison  schyouknowwho@talktalk.co.uk
Monmouth & district: Laurence Moss  laurencemoss@hotmail.com
Chepstow /Caldicot: Rosemary Parkhouse  rosemaryparkhouse@yahoo.co.uk

For a complete list of all schools go to **SCHOOLS**
For instructions for sowing wild flower seeds go to **PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS**

With best wishes from the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire Schools Team,
Sue, Rosemary, Laurence and Jon