Welcome back to school after a glorious summer holiday.

This summer has been a very successful one for flowers and pollinating insects. There have been lots of bees, butterflies and hoverflies in our gardens and they are still to be seen feeding on late-flowering species, like sedums and asters, which provide food for the new queen bumblebees that are fattening themselves up for their long winter hibernation. Monmouthshire County Council, in partnership with Bee Friendly Monmouthshire, has planted some stunning displays of bee-friendly flowers on roundabouts, grass verges and in parks that everyone has admired.

We hope some of you may have seen the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire stall at the Monmouthshire Show and picked up a leaflet. If you haven’t yet made the Bee-Friendly Promise you can do it on this website.

Good News!

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire was officially launched on Friday October 10th at 11a.m. at Kate Humble’s farm, Humble by Nature, in Penallt, near Monmouth. Kate Humble, whom I’m sure you all know well from her appearance on Spring Watch on BBC TV, has kindly agreed to be the Patron of Bee Friendly Monmouthshire. An invitation was emailed out to all the schools who have participated in our wild flower planting project and we were very pleased that two schools were able to be present at the launch; Gilwern Primary School and Deri View Primary School. Some of the children helped Kate to plant a bee-friendly sign in her garden and after the ceremony there was time to explore the farm and look at the hens, pigs, ducks and geese and the amazing Aquaponics solar greenhouse. It was a lovely sunny day and all the children had a good time. If you have never been to Humble by Nature have a look at their website www.humblebynature.com

Update on your Wild Flower beds

We hope your pollinator-friendly flower beds did what they were supposed to and provided you with colourful blooms and hungry insects with nectar and pollen! Remember you should see more flowers next summer as the perennials in the mix are not likely to flower until their second season.

A few schools have contacted us to let us know that they did not get a very good display of flowers. We have informed the seed suppliers about this and they suspect this may have been due to lack of regular watering (especially during the long summer holidays), soil that was too rich (if, for example, the plot had been fertilised for vegetable growing previously), a shady site, late sowing or birds eating the seeds.
If you are not entirely happy with the results of your planting do let us know as the **Bumblebee Conservation Trust** has kindly provided us with some more (different) seed from Emorsgate Seeds so that you can top-up any flower beds that did not come up to expectations. If you would like to sow some more seed please let us know the size of your plot so we know how much seed to deliver to you. (Email address below) This seed is a slightly different mix from the last one, again a mixture of annuals and perennials. But be quick as the seeds need to be sown soon. Check out the Emorsgate Seeds website for useful advice about sowing. [www.emorsegateseeds.com](http://www.emorsegateseeds.com) Our 2 mixes are ESF2 (Wild pollen and nectar flowers - perennials) and EC2 (Special cornfield mixture - annuals). We will mix the 2 seed mixes together. The sowing rate we recommend for bare earth is 4g per sq m.

### Autumn maintenance of your existing plants

The **annual** flowers in the old seed mix will have finished flowering now and will have set seed. You can trim them back with sheers (or strim them carefully if you have a large plot) and compost the clippings. Plants just showing leaves and no flowers will be the **perennials** in the mix which will flower next summer. Don’t cut them back or dig them up UNLESS they are obvious weeds like dandelions, brambles, dock, nettles, bindweed or thistles. Dig these out and pull out any tufts of grass that have self-seeded. If in doubt leave them.

If you have plenty of green leaves that are NOT weeds you have no need to sow more seed. If you have a lot of bare patches (or weedy patches!) then sow more seed. The sowing rate we recommend for bare earth is 4g per sq m but you may have to reduce that if you are just sowing in between other plants. Play it by ear.

If you are unsure ask one of the team* to come out to have a look at the site.

### To sow your new seed

1. Sow the seed ideally before the end of October.
2. Dig up all weeds and grasses.
3. Lightly fork the soil between the plants that remain.
4. Rake it to a fine, crumbly texture and dampen the soil a little if it is very dry.
5. Scatter your new seed by hand a little at a time to ensure an even spread. You may have to estimate the amount if sowing into bare patches.
6. Tread the seeds in gently and water in with a watering can, not a hose.
7. Do not feed with any compost or fertiliser. This is not necessary.
8. Make sure you keep the new seed bed watered regularly unless it’s raining.

We will either deliver your seed personally or post it if your school is some distance from Abergavenny, Chepstow or Monmouth.

### *Contacts:

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