Bee Friendly Monmouthshire - Garden Flowers Quiz
As trialled at Chepstow and Monmouth Shows 2015

For those of you who took part in person and have forgotten the answers, plus those who weren’t able to attend and wish to test their horticultural skills, here are our Garden Flowers ID Quizzes from the Chepstow and Monmouth Shows.

1. CHEPSTOW SHOW

Cover the answers beneath (Don’t cheat!) and then study the photo below. See if you can identify the 6 plants and then select the odd one out and explain why.

A: English Marigold (*Calendula Officinalis*) is a magnet for pollinating insects and will attract beneficial pollinating insects to your vegetable flowers, such as courgettes. They will also attract aphid-eating hoverflies.

B: Lambs’ Ears (*Stachys Byzantina*) attract all sorts of bees with their spikes of tiny pink flowers, but in particular the Wool Carder Bee, a species of solitary bee. The males hatch out first in the spring, find a patch of Lambs’ Ears, and stake out their claim, in competition
with other males. They are very territorial and patrol the patch, seeing off any other males that arrive. They even see off much larger bumblebees who are feeding on the Lambs’ Ears flowers by attacking them from behind. When a female arrives, the lucky male is able to mate with her, and then lie in wait for the next female. These bees are so-called because the female “cards” or scrapes the hairs from the velvety leaves to line her nest. This provides excellent insulation to protect her bee larvae over winter.

C: Marjoram (Origanum vulgare). Many common herbs provide perfect food for pollinators, if you let them flower. They provide a splash of colour and will fill your garden with their scent.

D: Old English Lavender (Lavandula augustifolia) Of all the many varieties of lavender the Old English lavender species is a type much favoured by bees, especially bumblebees. The plants do get quite large so give them plenty of space.

E: Begonia (Begonia). These double-flowered plants are popular with local councils in their planters and hanging baskets every summer. A great pity for, as far as pollinators are concerned, they might as well be made of plastic! There are so many colourful and attractive pollinator-friendly flowers we could plant instead of Begonias and other sterile bedding plants such as Petunias, Busy Lizzies and Pelargoniums. These hybridised cultivars are specially bred to provide big showy double blooms at the expense of the pollen-bearing stamens that would feed pollinating insects. And the nectar that provides carbohydrate-rich fuel for the insects, and the key ingredient of honey, is inaccessible beneath layers of double petals. Result: no nectar and no pollen. And no honey either! Begonias – be gone! Likewise Petunias, Bizzy Lizzies and Pelargoniums (often called annual Geraniums) and other so-called “Bedding Plants”.

F: Echinops “Blue Globe” (Echinops bannaticus ‘Blue Globe’). A type of Globe Thistle, with tiny intense blue florets that each offer an energising shot of nectar to a variety of pollinators. Grow at the back of a border where their stunning blue globes will be covered in bees.

2. MONMOUTH SHOW
Answers:  A Lavender; B Begonia; C Echinops; D Marjoram/Oregano; 
E English Marigold; F Buddleja (right F1 B. davidii; left F2 B. globosa)
Odd one out:  Begonia  Only plant of no benefit to pollinators

Plants A to E were the same as in the Chepstow Show quiz

F1: Buddleia davidii. A large deciduous shrub that can reach 4 metres in height although there are dwarf cultivars for smaller gardens. Buddleia particularly attracts butterflies and it is often known as the Butterfly Bush. Please beware - this strain of Buddleia, native to China, is classified as an invasive non-native species. Its seeds readily disperse from gardens into country areas and it has been widely established in the wild, where it has often out-competed native plants, reducing biodiversity and threatening native ecosystems. If you plant it in your garden it is strongly recommended that you rigorously dead-head the flowers as soon as they start to fade, before they set seed, or, better still, plant a sterile type of Buddleia instead, such as Buddleia x weyeriana, a hybrid of B. davidii and B. globosa, which has yellow flowers and won’t set seed. The Butterfly Conservation Trust advises against planting Buddleia davidii in places where it may be unmanaged and recommends removing seed heads.

F2: Buddleia globosa. An excellent pollinator shrub for bees and butterflies. This one has scented globes of orange-yellow flowers, unlike the more elongated flower heads of Buddleia davidii. This is a large evergreen or semi-evergreen shrub reaching 5 metres, originating from South America. This type of Buddleia is non-invasive owing to its wingless seeds.

For more information on the huge range of flowering plants that are of benefit to pollinating insects of all kinds please consult the following websites:-

Royal Horticultural Society
www.rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators
Three lists of pollinator plants:  Garden Plants; Wildflowers; Plants of the World

The Pollinator Garden
www.foxleas.com
Created by naturalist Marc Carlton from Chepstow

The Wildlife gardening forum
www.wlgf.org
Plenty of information on this excellent website

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust
www.bumblebeeconservation.org
Information about the best plants for bumblebees

Butterfly Conservation
www.butterfly-conservation.org
Information about the best plants for butterflies and moths