

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire. Newsletter: July 2016

Dear Beefriendlies! Welcome to the latest edition of the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire newsletter. Here is all the latest information about what we have been up to since our last newsletter as well as forthcoming events and publications. It looks quite impressive when you write it all down! I had no idea we had been so busy over the past 5 months!

Events and talks: March - July

- March 3rd:** Illustrated talk on pollinating insects to the Llantilio Pertholey (Abergavenny) branch of the WI given by Sue Harrison. Very well attended and a lot of interest created.
- March 6th:** BfM stall at Seedy Sunday in Abergavenny. Our “Monmouthshire Mix” seeds were snapped up just in time for spring sowing.
- April 16th:** Community Dinner at Trinity Church Hall, Abergavenny raised over £300 for Bee Friendly Monmouthshire. Between courses Sue Harrison gave a short talk on the importance of pollinators for food production. The money raised will be used to fund the BfM Pollinator-friendly flower beds at the Eisteddfod in July-August.

April 23rd– July 31st: National Garden Scheme Gwent Open Gardens

If you have never visited the NGS gardens before you have been missing a real treat. The gardens are an inspiration and provide a splendid day out including home-made teas. The gardens are not only beautiful but are a magnet for pollinating insects. This year we drew up a set of criteria for the best pollinator garden which was circulated to NGS garden owners. Even in our own small gardens it is possible to match many of the criteria. You will find the list shortly on our website on the section about the 2016 NGS gardens. BfM ran a full page advertisement in the 2016 Glamorgan and Gwent Gardens brochure which reaches thousands of people. We donate half the proceeds of the sale of “Monmouthshire Mix” to the NGS. Last year we raised over £30. This year we should exceed this amount.

BfM volunteers ran stalls at a number of gardens selling “Monmouthshire Mix” seeds and handing out leaflets :- Glebe House (Llanfair Kilgeddin); High Glanau Manor (Lydart); Penpergwm Lodge (Nr. Abergavenny); Nant-y-Bedd (Fforest Coal Pit); Rockfield Park (Nr. Monmouth); Llanfoist Village Gardens (Abergavenny).

NB. Last garden: Clytha Park Sunday July 31st



Bee Friendly Monmouthshire stall at Lanfoist Village Hall 15 June

- May 5- 8th:** BfM presented on Bees for Development stand at Malvern Spring Garden Festival.
- June 1st:** Illustrated talk on gardening for wild bees and the relationship between flowers and pollinators given to the Chepstow Townswomens' Guild by Rosemary Parkhouse and Cyrene Powell.
- June 11-12th:** Bees for Development/Bee Friendly Monmouthshire combined stall at Hellens Flower Festival (Much Marcle, Herefordshire). Look out for this next year if you missed it. You would love it! Plant stalls, talks plus great food. Good child-friendly activities too.
- June 17th:** Launch of successful King Coed Meadows appeal by Monmouthshire Meadows Group attended by Ian Vicary and Sue Harrison. A grand total of £90,000 was raised to purchase these precious wild-flower meadows. BfM made a donation to the cost of the display panel which was gratefully acknowledged in the MMG leaflet.
- July 2-3rd:** BfM presented on Bees for Development stand at Humble By Nature Big Day Out weekend.
- July 4th:** Some of our members attended a talk given by Marc Carlton at the St. Arvan's Gardening Club about Chepstow's wildflower meadows at Penterry Park and Piggies Hill.
- July 9th:** BfM stall at Gwent Wildlife Trust's Fun Day at Magor Marsh (Cyrene Powell and Morris Jones). Excellent family fun.
- July 11th:** BfM display at Transition Chepstow event featuring a talk on local orchards. (Cyrene Powell and Rosemary Parkhouse)
- July 15th:** BfM stall at the Monmouth Organic event. One of our members, Stephanie Tyler, was interviewed for a short video.

Forthcoming Events

- July 31st:** **NGS garden: Clytha Park (Abergavenny)** Check the MGS website.
- July 29th – August 6th:** **Eisteddfod, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny.**
BfM will showcase plants for pollinators in two raised beds just inside the main entrance to the "Maes", the Eisteddfod site. The plants have been chosen to illustrate how easy it is to provide food for pollinators in our gardens. There will be a report on the BfM website about the relationship between pollinators and plants as well as a complete list of all the plants in the flower beds. We have produced some new Welsh/English bilingual display panels, leaflets and BfM garden signs especially for the Eisteddfod. Our seeds and garden signs will be on sale in the Monmouthshire County Council tent.
- August 13th:** **Chepstow Show.** BfM will be in a shared marquee alongside local countryside and environmental groups. There will be a competition run by Transition Chepstow for the best planter for pollinators, to be judged by Marc Carlton. Check the Transition Chepstow website for details.
- September 10th:** **Usk Show.** Look out for the BfM stand.

BfM will not be standing at the Monmouth Show this year.

Donations

- **£500** to Monmouthshire Meadows Group towards the cost of a permanent display panel at King Coed Meadows.
- **£300** to scientific research being undertaken by Professor Dave Goulson (the founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust) at the University of Sussex to screen plants on sale in garden centres for the presence of neonicotinoid pesticides. We at BfM have expressed concern about this issue. It is vital to know if these harmful systemic insecticides are used on garden centre plants. Professor Goulson's research project will seek to produce the evidence we need. Professor

Goulson is raising funds through the crowd-finding platform Walacea. He has received £6000 in pledges so far. If you would like to make a contribution the link is below.

Professor Goulson explains the purpose of this proposed research project:-

Support new research to find out what pesticides are in the plants on sale in garden centres:

<http://bit.ly/25wdu7v>

As we all know, bees are in trouble. Around the world many types of bee are in decline, and some species have gone extinct. These declines are driven by multiple factors including loss of wildflowers from the countryside, outbreaks of disease, and exposure to the many pesticides used in modern farming. This is particularly worrying, as we need bees; they pollinate our crops and our wildflowers. Without bees we would have no strawberries, tomatoes, chili peppers, blueberries or cucumbers, to name just a few. We need to take action to help them.

One action we can all take is to grow bee-friendly flowers in our gardens, providing bees with much-needed nectar and pollen. If every gardener did this we could turn our suburban areas into giant bee nature reserves. Buying plants for bees has proved to be very popular, and most garden centres help by providing labelling to show which plants are best for bees. The Royal Horticultural Society has a special “Perfect for pollinators” label, with a picture of a bumblebee on it. Most bee-friendly flowers are also very pretty, so planting them has the added bonus of making your garden beautiful.

Sadly, there is a problem, a hidden danger. The pretty flowers on sale in garden centres are usually grown on the continent, many of them in the Netherlands, in intensive production facilities. To keep them looking perfect they are treated with chemicals, including a class of insecticide called neonicotinoids which are very harmful to bees. These chemicals, neonics for short, are neurotoxins that attack the brains of insects and paralyse them, or at lower doses leave them dazed and confused.

Neonics have been banned for use by farmers on flowering crops such as oilseed rape, but their use on garden flowers is much less well controlled. If you ask your local garden centre whether their plants have been treated with neonics, they usually do not know. Greenpeace recently screened some garden flowers on sale in mainland Europe, and found that many contained neonics and other toxic chemicals. It seems almost certain that this is also true in the UK, but no-one knows for sure. The sad truth is that this weekend a kind-hearted wildlife enthusiast might buy a pretty bee-friendly plant such as lavender, labelled with a RHS “Perfect for Pollinators” sticker, not knowing that it is full of potent neurotoxins and that they will be inadvertently poisoning their bees.

Our Solution

We want to raise money so that we can screen a range of bee-friendly plants from UK garden centres and identify which ones are truly safe. These could then be sold as neonic-free. If we find significant concentrations of neonics or other harmful chemicals, we would use this information to highlight the issue, putting pressure on the garden centres to buy in only plants that are genuinely good for bees.

Unfortunately this work is not cheap. It is very time consuming to prepare the samples and the expensive equipment needed to screen for the chemicals costs a lot to maintain. This is where we are seeking your help. For £5,000 we can do an initial screening of a selection of bee-friendly plants from UK garden centres. If we can raise even more then we can screen larger numbers of plants and get a clearer picture as to which ones are safe.

Find out more here: <http://bit.ly/25wdu7v>

Dave Goulson

Professor of Bumblebees, University of Sussex

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire Hedgerow Manifesto

Nicola Bradbear and Stephanie Tyler have produced a Hedgerow Manifesto setting out the best practice for managing our hedgerows for the benefit of pollinating insects and other wildlife. The manifesto will shortly be going to print and will be available soon on our website. It is hoped that Monmouthshire County Council will be in favour of adopting this new policy for the county.

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire leads the way in Wales

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire has been in the forefront of establishing policies to support pollinating insects within the county. Our reputation has spread further afield and the BfM concept is now being adopted by the Welsh Government Pollinator Initiative across Wales.

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire Steering Group

If you would like to get more actively involved in the work of our organisation you would be very welcome to join us in our Steering Group meetings. We currently meet every other month at members' homes. **Our next meeting is on August 11th**. Please get in touch with us via email if you would like to attend and we will send you details.

Well, I honestly think that's covered everything! Kind regards to all our supporters and partner organisations. Enjoy the rest of the Summer. We hope to see you soon at the Eisteddfod. You will find our pollinator-friendly flower beds beyond the ticket office and either side of the small pedestrian bridge. And maybe we will see you at the Chepstow and Usk shows. Why not try your luck at the planter competition?

Stop press

Dave Goulson will be giving a lecture "**Saving our Bumblebees**" hosted by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust at the Hereford Sixth Form College Performing Arts Centre, Folly Lane, HR1 1LU on Thursday Oct 27th from 7.00 – 10.00pm. Cost £10.50. Book your place online at www.herefordshirewt.org/events . There will be book signings.

Sue Harrison

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