



Bee Friendly Monmouthshire: Summer Newsletter: July 2017

Dear Beefriendlyies!

Welcome to the summer edition of the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire newsletter. Here is our calendar for forthcoming events and an update on all our meetings, events, and activities over the past six months.

Bee Friendly Monmouthshire Summer events

Chepstow Show, Saturday 12 August: BfM will share a marquee with Gwent Energy CIC and other local groups.

Usk Show, Saturday 9 September: BfM will have a stand again at the Usk Show.

National Gardens Scheme (NGS) open gardens: BfM will hold a stall at Nant-y-Bedd garden in Fforest Coal Pit on Sunday July 30th. The Nelson Garden in Monmouth is open on 10th September.

Meetings, events and activities January – July 2017

January 19th: Steering Group meeting.

February 12th: BfM stall at **Seedy Sunday** at Abergavenny Community Centre.

March 1st: BfM members attended **Just Food** event at Abergavenny Community Centre to discuss fringe events at the Abergavenny Food Festival in September.

March 11th: Grow Wild Network Day, Green meadow Community Farm, Cwmbran. Three BfM members attended this one day course which included talks on native plants, growing native wild flowers in public spaces and fascinating fungi.

March 22nd: Usk in Bloom was granted official recognition as a Bee Friendly organization under the Welsh Government's Caru Gwenyn/Bee Friendly scheme after being encouraged to apply by BfM.

March 23rd: Steering Group meeting. Nigel Leaworthy, MCC, gave an update on verge management in the county. There is now only one cut on verges plus a "safety cut" on A and B roads. Annual and perennial flower mixes will continue to be sown in MCC owned flowerbeds. Bedding plant purchases have been reduced by 80%. Herbicide use has been reduced by 40%. Hedgecutting is the responsibility of the landowner but MCC will make a vertical safety cut of 1 metre if a hedge is not cut.

May 8th: Sustainable beekeeping course for BfM Steering Group members at Ragman's Farm, Lydbrook, delivered by Dr. Nicola Bradbear and Monica Barlow. Our one day course consisted of a fascinating presentation followed by an introduction to the bees themselves with a practical demonstration of beekeeping skills.

May 20th: Monmouthshire Bee Festival, Nelson Garden, Monmouth. The first UK Bee Festival to celebrate the World Day of Bees and the first ever Bee Jokes competition judged by comedian Miles Jupp. Organised by Bees for Development, Bee Friendly Monmouthshire and other organisations. BfM organized a competition for local schoolchildren to produce hexagon-shaped bee designs or illustrated bee jokes. See the full report plus photos on the BfM website.

May 20th-21st: Monmouthshire Food Festival at Caldicot Castle. BfM held a stall at this event to stress the importance of bees for our food production. Our Monmouthshire Mix seed packets sold like hot cakes – 60 packets sold.

May 30th: Launch of the new BfM Hedgerow Manifesto, Shire Hall, Monmouth. Written by Dr. Nicola Bradbear (Bees for Development/BfM) and Dr. Stephanie Tyler (Monmouthshire Meadows Group/BfM). We were privileged to welcome as our Guest speaker **Professor Dave Goulson, President of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.** Find the full text of our new leaflet on our website. If you have hedges in your garden learn how to manage them for the benefit of wildlife, especially pollinating insects.

July 15th: Caldicot School Fete - BfM held a stall at this event and a bumper number of seed packets (70!) were sold plus 2 new members were signed up.

July 17th – 23rd: Bees' Needs Week this year is 17th to 23rd July. Not to worry if you missed it there is still lots of info on the webpage. www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs

July 23rd: Steering group meeting

BfM talks

To adult groups - April 11th to Usk Rotary Club, Glen-yr-Afon Hotel, Usk by Sue Harrison

To schools – May 15th to Gilwern School, Year One pupils, "All about bees" by Sue Harrison

June 20th to Osbaston School, Years 4,5 and 6 pupils, "All about bees" by Sue Harrison

Please get in touch if you know of an organisation or school that would like a talk.

Gwent Best kept village awards

BfM has supported the introduction of a new pollinator-friendly category for the first time in this year's annual competition. Three BfM members spent 3 days visiting 14 registered villages to judge this new category.

After this successful start it was agreed to develop this further next year.

New BfM signs for verges

We have produced a new sign which explains that the grass in a particular area has been left unmown until late summer to protect wild flowers and the pollinators that use them.

Wales Pollinators Taskforce meeting

Marc Carlton gave a detailed report of the most recent meeting to our steering group on July 23rd. The minutes of this meeting will be posted on the website below in due course.

<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Action-Plan-for-Pollinators>

Updates on new scientific research

1. National Botanic Garden of Wales research

In February Dr Natasha de Vere and her team published the results of their research into which flowers honeybees use for forage in early spring in and around the National Botanic Garden.

The research showed that the honeybees foraged far more on native woodland and hedgerow flowers than on the horticultural plants available within the botanical garden. The conclusion was that, during the spring, honey bees need access to native hedgerows and woodlands to provide major plants for foraging and that gardens cannot replace diverse semi-natural habitat. This research reinforces the importance of hedgerows which is the focus of BfM's new Hedgerow Manifesto.

The results are available on <http://www.nature.com/articles/srep42838>

2. Latest research by Professor Dave Goulson

The results of research conducted by Dave Goulson and others into the amounts of pesticide residue in ornamental plants on sale to the public have been published. The research identified a wide range of pesticides in leaves, pollen and nectar, even in those sold as "bee-friendly". 70% of plants contained neonicotinoid pesticides and the concentration of some pesticides was enough to pose a risk to bees' health. This report has raised concerns that garden plants purchased for the benefit of pollinating insects may be harming them. Neonicotinoids are systemic and persist in the plant and in the soil. An abstract is available on

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/67224>

3. Study into effects of neonicotinoids on bees

New field-based research by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology into the effects on bees of exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides was published in the magazine *Science* on June 29th this year. The research, conducted in the UK, Germany and Hungary, shows that neonicotinoids damage the survival of honeybee colonies as well as harming wild bees. German bees fared better as they foraged far less on the treated oilseed rape. This may indicate a more plentiful supply of wild flowers in Germany.

You can find a Guardian article with a link to the report in the News section of the BfM website.

Citizen Science

- **Butterfly Conservation: Big Butterfly Count** - July 14th to August 6th

Help collect data on butterflies in the UK this summer. This count provides vital evidence about the state of the UK's butterfly population. Go online at www.bigbutterflycount.org . You can also send in your sightings over the course of a year if you register for the **Garden Butterfly Survey** and send in your sightings at least once a month.

- **Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT)**

Help build up useful data about our bumblebees by joining in BBCT bumblebee surveys. The "Blooms for bees" survey checks which bees visit which plants; iRecord is a way of submitting sightings with photos if possible; Bee Walks require a more regular commitment and good bumblebee ID skills.

Check online at www.bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/surveys

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