

## “Help Wanted” – bees, butterflies, pollinators

You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.  
*Psalm 145:16*

We need our pollinators to thrive! Bees, butterflies, moths, wasps, flies, beetles – pollinators like these are essential for keeping our environment healthy and for growing our food. It’s estimated that around 88% of flowering plants and 75% of crop plants rely on pollinators, for example to produce many of the vegetables, fruits and nuts we eat. They’re also a vital source of food for other wildlife including robins, tits, blackbirds, sparrows, wrens and starlings.

Sadly, though, the overall numbers and spread of pollinators in the UK have declined in the past few decades, because of things like habitat loss, farming intensification, use of pesticides, and climate change.



Fortunately, help is at hand! From us! With the right approach, **our gardens** can become a haven for bees, butterflies and

other nectar-loving creatures. Even small areas of nectar-rich plants can be a real benefit to them, as well as looking very attractive. And people who don’t have a garden can put plants in pots or hanging baskets or on windowsills.

The RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) gives this advice on making gardens good for pollinators:



- Pack in lots of flowering plants
- Try to have plants flowering every month, including early spring and late autumn/winter, to provide a consistent food source throughout the year
- Major on plants which are native to Britain and the northern hemisphere, while using exotic plants to extend the season especially for late summer flowering
- See which plants work best for attracting pollinators and plant more of them

It also helps if we generally let the grass on our lawns grow longer before cutting and take part in “No Mow May” with some or all of the grass, allowing plants like buttercups and dandelions to flower and provide vital, early-season resources.

Other good suggestions are, providing a shallow water station or “beach-like” pond edge for thirsty insects; and avoiding the use of pesticides or herbicides in order to protect the pollinators we are trying to attract.



So, which are the best plants for pollinators? Head to the websites of the RHS and The Wildlife Trusts for fuller information, but here are some popular choices:

**Early season:** primrose, winter aconite, crocus, flowering cherry, sarcococca, daphne, forget-me-not, hellebore, early clematis

**Mid-season:** lavender, verbena, geranium, catmint, choisya, philadelphus, wallflower, mid-late clematis, alstroemeria, aubrieta

**Late season:** sedum (ice plant), ivy, michaelmas daisy, verbena, mahonia, anemone

**Herbs:** rosemary, thyme, chives, sage, marjoram

**Hardy annuals:** cosmos, borage, marigold, cornflower, californian poppy, sunflower, love-in-a-mist

Another option, if there is room, is to create a wildflower meadow in part of your garden, or a wildflower area like we have in All Saints’ churchyard. There are

plenty of good native wildflower seed mixes available to buy and, again, RHS and The Wildlife Trusts offer advice on how to go about it.

We hope this article may inspire you to make your own gardens and outdoor areas even more attractive for bees, butterflies and other pollinators, so that you can enjoy their company while you are enjoying all your lovely flowering plants!

*Chris & Roger McFarland*

*To find out more or to share your ideas on Eco Church please go to the website [www.allsaintsspringfield.org.uk/church-life/eco-church](http://www.allsaintsspringfield.org.uk/church-life/eco-church) or speak to one of the Eco Church Group – Roger McFarland, Nicky Morecroft, Chris McFarland, Ian Poston, Dave Gauld, Beth Cornish, Ann Salmon, Shirley Duggan.*



### **This month’s eco suggestions**

- **Compost or recycle garden waste**, and avoid having bonfires
- Enjoy some **vegetarian meals**, and eat less meat and dairy food