

FEATURES

BRING ON THE BEES

bees, butterflies and other animals



A mint moth feeding on catmint in a garden



A tree bumblebee on meadow crane's bill



Six-spot burnet on wild marjoram PHOTOS: Alex Morris

insects. Many butterflies, moths and non-specialist insects are drawn to a big landing platform, as is found in the versatile daisy family, with offerings such as spectacular sunflowers – great for bees and also finches – stunning knapweeds, ox-eye daisy, corn chamomile and globe thistle.

The nectar and pollen-rich pea family is fantastic too, especially lupin, wisteria, sainfoin, trefoils, vetches and clovers, all adored by pollinators. Some other good general pollinator plants are phacelia, mint, borage, aquilegia and the

English crane's-bills such as the gorgeous blue Geranium pratense.

There is a specialist native wildflower nursery up at Feed Bristol near Stoke Park, with profits going to Avon Wildlife Trust to support its nature reserves. Some garden centres also stock a few natives.

If you'd like to see butterflies, make sure you welcome them with the right food plants for their caterpillars - they are in fact fussy and need very specific leaves to munch, unlike in the children's story books! A few

native grasses left to grow long are essential for many species such as skippers, meadow brown, ringlet, speckled wood, gatekeeper and wall butterflies. A nettle patch will attract egg-laying red admiral, comma, peacock and small tortoiseshell.

You might even spot a giant woolly bear wriggling on the nettles – these are the funky hairy caterpillars of the garden tiger moth. Holly and ivy will bring you holly blues. To see many a child's favourite, the elephant hawk-moth, plant some fuchsia – or just leave any willowherb 'weeds' and look out for awesome giant caterpillars.

Try to plant a feast for all seasons. Climbers, shrubs or a small tree will offer nesting space, shelter and a larder to insects, birds and bats. Aim for

berry plants and nutritious seeds for birds, such as rowan, crab, firethorn, hawthorn, sloe, honeysuckle, hazel, holly, field maple, buckthorn, ivy, spindle or barberry. These species provide lunch to several hundred species of caterpillars and flies, and other beneficial insects, including many pollinators. You may spot windfall apples and plums being gorged by peacock and red admiral in autumn too.

If you include night-scented plants such as honeysuckle, stock, tobacco plant or evening primrose you will attract moths. And next time you spend an evening in the garden, look out for bats skydiving over your climbers, gleaning off the insects.

How many manicured show gardens can make claims that compare with that?

Can you trust the label on whether nursery-grown plants are good for pollinators? Advice here, along with useful plant lists: rhs.org.uk/science/

conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/perfect-for-pollinators
The Wildlife Trusts also offer lots of good advice and ideas: tinyurl.com/y7tpa2yp

that you never suspected

environment of the Cumberland Basin on Tuesday May 22.

If you have never seen the best views in South Bristol, join the Bristol South Skyline Walk on May 5. This walk has its own website: bssw.org.uk and stickers on lampposts (inset) to show you the way.

Dozens of other walks throughout May traverse areas such as the Avon Gorge, Hengrove nature reserve, the River Malago, Dundry Hill,



and the Northern Slopes. Other routes include the historic Ashton Gatehouse, Bristol Street Art, Bristol's Burning! – The 1831 Riots, and Whitchurch Village. Times and locations are on the website, or you can find out more by emailing info@bristolwalkfest.co.uk

Most walks are suitable for all ages – the event is supported by Active Aging Bristol and Link Age. bristolwalkfest.com

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