

BIODIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE IN WARWICK DISTRICT

AUTUMN 2024



Welcome to the autumn edition of our seasonal biodiversity newsletter!

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WARWICKSHIRE'S LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY - HAVE YOUR SAY

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were introduced as part of the Environment Act 2021 to help reverse nature's decline. They will be used to identify and prioritise opportunities for nature improvements, focusing on particular areas, species or habitats.

48 LNRSs will be produced throughout England to link together to cover the whole country, forming part of a Nature Recovery Network.

Warwickshire's LNRS will be produced by Warwickshire County Council (the Responsible Body), working with the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

We need your help!

The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull LNP is coordinating a major consultation exercise to assess the state of nature in Warwickshire and find out what people want to see in the LNRS.

Have your say to help shape the recovery of nature in Warwickshire - <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/bi/nature-recovery/>

The survey closes on 29 September 2024.

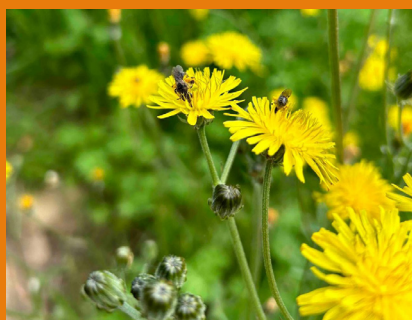
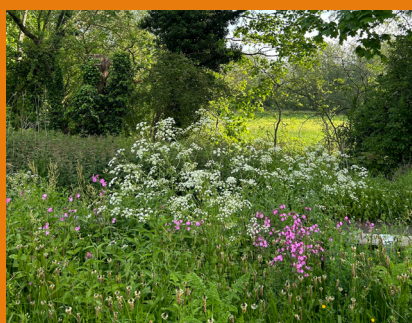


no mow MAY 2024

We've been supporting Plantlife's No Mow May campaign again this year by suspending grass cutting in parts of the district throughout May and letting grass and wild plants grow naturally.

Not only does this provide a much-needed boost for wild plants, insects and other wildlife over the summer but it also has benefits in terms of flood alleviation, soil protection, improved air quality, natural cooling in hot weather and capturing carbon emissions from the atmosphere.

We made a few changes this year to address the issues we experienced in 2023, and also added some new No Mow May areas into parks and open spaces including St Nicholas Park, Jephson Gardens and Abbey Fields. We had great feedback about these new areas and had lots of lovely photos sent in of other No Mow May areas across the district. Here's some examples...



GRASSLAND MEADOWS



Since the 1930s, over 97% of wildflower meadows have been lost mainly due to intensive farming, development and increased use of fertilisers and pesticides. However, the incredible value of meadows is slowly being appreciated and there is a growing trend to create and restore meadows - from the smallest garden to the largest fields.

Over the last 20 years we have been working to increase the amount of meadow areas in our parks, open spaces and cemeteries in recognition of the many benefits they provide for people and nature. Meadows require a particular management regime to ensure they thrive. They are left to grow over spring and summer and then cut from late summer into early autumn once the plants have flowered and set seed. The cuttings are raked into rows and allowed to dry for several days before being baled. This allows any seeds and insects to drop to the ground before baling. The bales are removed from site and mostly sent for

composting, with some being passed on for re-use.

Once the bales have been removed, it would be ideal for livestock to graze the meadow area to help tread seed into the ground and reduce grass growth over winter allowing wildflowers space to spread and germinate. Unfortunately, this isn't feasible in most of our parks and open spaces but there are some areas where this would work well. We'd be very keen to hear from local livestock owners who might be willing to work with us - [please get in touch](#).

Where funding allows, we will overseed meadow areas in Autumn or Spring to further increase the floral diversity. These areas will be cut short for the first growing season to help the wildflowers establish and will then be managed as meadows going forward. It can take around 8 years for a meadow to properly establish!

[Subscribe to our YouTube channel](#) and look out for a video coming soon showing grassland meadow management in action.

SUMMER BEDDING GIVEAWAY

Around the end of September/beginning of October, we plan to remove our summer bedding from Jephson Gardens and St Nicholas Park and give it away to anyone wanting it - while stocks last! Look out for information on our social media channels nearer the time and feel free to pop along on the dates advertised.

PRAYING MANTISES IN THE GLASSHOUSE AT JEPHSON GARDENS

Praying mantises have been introduced to The Glasshouse in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa, to help naturally control an outbreak of stick insects. We're not sure how the stick insects found their way into The Glasshouse, but their population has rapidly grown and now needs to be brought under control. Rather than using chemical pest control methods, we wanted to trial a more natural method of control – praying mantises!

There are now three praying mantises living in The Glasshouse, although you'd be very lucky to spot them as they're experts at camouflage!



FREE TREES FOR FARMERS SCHEME



The [Trees Call to Action Project](#) and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust have been supporting Warwick District Council for the third year running to provide free tree packs to farmers in the district to help boost biodiversity and fight climate change.

Planting trees and hedgerows on agricultural land helps to increase connectivity of habitats across the landscape, providing vital wildlife corridors. It also provides benefits in terms of shade and shelter for livestock, providing habitats for birds, insects and other wildlife, improving water quality and soil health, and soaking up

carbon dioxide to help combat climate change.

Farmers have been able to choose from a variety of tree packs, including hedgerow packs, fruit tree packs and woodland packs, allowing them to find the perfect species mix for their land.

Applications for 2024 closed in July and requests for nearly 11,500 trees are currently being processed – a 77% increase in the number of trees requested compared to the 2023/24 planting season.

The trees will be made available to successful applicants in the winter for planting during the 2024/25 tree planting season.

BEE FRIENDLY SCHOOL AWARDS 2024



Bee Friendly Leamington has set up a local award programme for schools to receive 'bee friendly' status. Schools must fulfil certain criteria to receive a bronze, silver or gold award with top awardees receiving native fruit trees and bronze awardees receiving pollen-rich flower seeds.

Bee Friendly Leamington supports schools through the awards process by delivering 'Why Bees Matter' assemblies and organising pollen hunt challenges and practical activities to help

children and staff understand the importance of bees and what they need to survive and thrive.

Silver awardees for 2024 include Park Hill Junior School, St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School and Sydenham Primary School. Bronze awardees for 2024 include Kingsway Community Primary School, Shrubland Street Community Primary School, St. Anthony's Catholic Primary, St. Paul's C of E Primary School and Warwick Preparatory School.

Please contact Beefriendlyleamington@gmail.com to find out more.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP NATURE AT HOME...

Many species depend on extra food and shelter throughout autumn as they prepare for the cold and scarce winter months.

Here's some simple things you can do at home to help:

- Avoid pruning hedges until late winter or early spring so that wildlife can take advantage of the insects and fruits provided during the winter months. Consider cutting hedges on a 2-to-3-year rotation, targeting different sections each year to allow berries and nuts to grow and provide an important food source for wildlife.
- Offer clean nest boxes for birds by putting up new boxes or cleaning out ones you already have. Chicks will have fledged, and boxes will instead offer valuable shelter to birds as temperatures drop.
- Keep bird baths and feeders topped up – these can be a lifeline when food and water is scarce. Keep bird baths ice-free by floating a small ball on the surface to disturb the formation of ice.
- Help hedgehogs prepare for hibernation by leaving out small amounts of food to help them build up fat reserves and creating a winter home out of leaves and twigs in a quiet corner of your garden.
- Check for hedgehogs before lighting any bonfires. Lift parts of the bonfire section by section using a broom. Don't use forks, spades or rakes as this might injure a hedgehog.
- Build a bug hotel to give minibeasts like bees, ladybirds and spiders a safe and cosy place to shelter as temperatures drop. Autumn is a great time to find lots of natural materials for your bug hotel including pine cones, dried twigs and fallen leaves.
- Leave ivy to thrive until the new year. Often associated with strangling trees and causing damage to buildings, it actually does neither of these things and has lots of benefits. It provides a vital source of nectar, pollen and berries over autumn and beyond as well as shelter for insects, birds, bats and other wildlife. It is one of the last garden sources of nectar for late-flying insects and any pruning is best left until the new year.
- Autumn is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Choose native bulbs such as crocuses, daffodils, hyacinths, snowdrops and tulips to give your garden a colour boost after a long winter and provide an early source of nectar for insects emerging from hibernation.

STARLING MURMURATIONS

We're approaching the key time of year to witness the visual spectacle of starling murmurations - the name given to large groups of starlings dancing together in patterns across the skies.

Starlings are familiar visitors to our parks, gardens and towns, with a beautiful purple and green sheen to their black feathers. Unfortunately, their populations have suffered significant decline in recent decades due to factors such as habitat loss, food shortages, changing agricultural practices and climate change. They now feature on the Red

List for birds of most conservation concern and are one of the target species in Warwick District Council's Biodiversity Action Programme.

To help starlings and other bird species that are in decline, consider installing nest boxes in your garden, providing food and water sources all year round and avoiding the use of pesticides at home.

Use the [Starling Murmurations Roost Map](#) to find local starling roost locations where you might be able to see murmurations. Help keep the map up to date by logging any murmurations you witness.

A QUARTET OF GREEN FLAG AWARDS

Green Flag Awards have been received for four of our parks and open spaces. Jephson Gardens received its' 18th consecutive flag and the Pump Room Gardens, Oakley Wood and Crackley Wood received flags for the second year running.

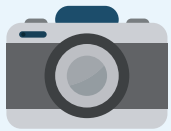
The Green Flag Award scheme recognises the value of parks and open spaces to wildlife, particularly in urban areas, and this is a key part of the judging criteria.

The four award winning sites received high scores for the work being done to conserve and enhance biodiversity including bulb planting, wildflower meadows, tree planting, woodland management, bird and bat boxes, hibernation niches (hibernacula) for wildlife, bird feeding stations, and deadwood habitats.

We hope to receive Green Flag Awards for more of our parks and open spaces in the future.



BIODIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION - CLOSING DATE SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2024



Our Biodiversity Photography Competition closes on Sunday 8 September 2024 so make sure you submit any last-minute entries for the chance to win a £100 voucher.

This year's theme is 'all things bright, beautiful, great and small'.

Full details can be found at www.warwickdc.gov.uk/photographycompetition

Look out for the competition results on our social media channels and in our next newsletter...

AUTUMN EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

[Coventry and Warwickshire RSPB group events](#), throughout autumn 2024

[Foundry Wood events and activities](#), Princes Drive, Leamington Spa, throughout autumn 2024

[Volunteering opportunities with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#)

[Warwickshire Country Parks events and activities](#), throughout autumn 2024

Warwick District Council summer bedding giveaway, Jephson Gardens and St Nicholas Park, late September/early October (specific dates will be advertised on our social media channels nearer the time)

[Warwickshire Wildlife Trust events](#), throughout autumn 2024

If you have nature events and activities happening in Warwick District that you'd like included in future editions of this newsletter, please [get in touch](#).