



Welcome to our street garden

Bringing friends and neighbours together to address the decline of our insect population



Contents

Foreword by founders Nigel Collin and Sam Reynolds	1
A word from the chair	2
The Plantlife call for action	3
SWP is born	4
Early days	6
Our projects spring to life across Surrey - SWP in the press	8
A setback	10
Learning - and the way forward	11
Events in Surrey - SWP on the road!	12-19
Future projects	20
A thanks to our sponsors	21

Foreword

By Nigel Collin, Sam Reynolds and the SWP committee

Scientific research has now highlighted that our changing climate poses a major threat to life on our planet. The effects of this are being seen by the reduction in insect life.

In an attempt to reverse this trend, roadside wildflower meadows are springing up across the UK and helping wildlife in a big way. As well as encouraging bees, butterflies and other insects to flourish, the sight of a wildflower verge has an uplifting effect on all who see the flowers.

Biodiversity is a key element of the vision of a sustainable borough/ district and wildflowering has an important role to play in this respect. In recent years, several Surrey Councils have worked with local groups to incorporate wildflowers into greenspace that would otherwise be unused. For example, on selective roundabouts in boroughs or districts and along highway verges.

“Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. Biodiversity is important for its own sake, and human survival depends upon it.”

The Surrey’s Wildflowering Project’s aim is to build a partnership that enables wildflowering in our county as well as promoting and celebrating the boroughs’/districts’ diverse countryside and urban environments.

We cannot deliver this vision on our own – collaborative working with partners will be essential in achieving the objectives.

Together we can positively influence the natural environment of Surrey and our boroughs for generations to come.

This foreword appeared in the first SWP introductory leaflet published in 2020



A word from the chair

I joined the project shortly after the end of the first lockdown. This lovely crew are kindred spirits who have lit a fire in me. So many projects like this have not survived the long haul that was COVID-19 and some are still fighting their way back.

I noticed on my (many) "Whitty Walks" with my husband wild plants that I knew absolutely nothing about; I started a notebook. I observed the insects attracted to them. Then I wondered why they were growing there in the first place.

Before me was the door to a time machine: Viking brewers, ancient alchemists, the diarist Samuel Pepys enjoying the local ale, "Mugwort", made with the plant of the same name. I heard Roman polymath Pliny the Elder arguing with the Magi regarding the correct use of Vervain, a pretty wild herb related to Lemon Verbena. In the not so distant past, Common Mallow leaves sustained the population during the siege of Jerusalem - it is a familiar roadside plant in Surrey. Korean people celebrate spring with a dish of sweet soy sauce and wild Burdock root.

There was murder in the hedgerows too! Plants that lured flies and caught them in sticky traps. Another favourite from childhood, Shepherd's Purse, poisons small insects and absorbs their bodies with its roots. Hemlock that beautifies our river banks did for poor old Socrates.

After all this drama I was glad to get back to meeting up with everybody to discuss a way forward. I was not the only one gathering resources and finding places for native plants! Members of SWP were busy in Bookham, Fetcham, Spelthorne, Brockham, Epsom, Coulsdon - all over Surrey!

As we went out and about to take our suggestions to the public it was heartwarming to see how many were already very busy finding places for nature on their streets, balconies, gardens and workplaces. All I have left to say is - happy sowing!

Kim, chair of the SWP committee

Kim Spickett is a borough councillor in Epsom and Ewell



The Plantlife call to action



Native flower charity Plantlife has produced a number of award winning guides that champion the growing of key species.

Ugly, litter-strewn verges should not be left in such a dreadful state. Children often comment on littering - they know how wrong it is. Increasingly, our road verges are being planted

with native trees and seeded with flowers and grasses. Train companies are getting on board too; we recently heard from South West Trains, who are taking steps to return tracksides to nature.

"Today, the majority of the UK's grass road verges are either cut too frequently and at the wrong time, or abandoned to scrub. Cuttings are left to lie creating a thick thatch, inhibiting growth and increasing soil nutrient levels, which further stimulates vigorous grasses and other nutrient-loving plants"¹

"There are nearly 313,500 miles of rural road verge in the UK - equivalent in area to our remaining lowland species-rich grassland.

700 species of wild flower grow on road verges - nearly 45% of our total flora - but there has been a 20% drop in floral diversity due to poor management and nutrient pollution."¹

"For 23 million commuters, road verges can be their only daily contact with nature."

References

1. https://www.plantlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Managing-grassland-road-verges_2020.pdf retrieved 30.06.2023

Pictured: private verge project in Bookham, Surrey

SWP is born

Surrey's Wildflowering Project is a community-led initiative aiming to build a partnership that will enable wildflowering in our county as well as promoting and celebrating the boroughs'/ districts' diverse environments.

Surrey County Council (SCC) had already decided to utilise our valuable "roadside nature reserves" and do better when it came to how these areas were managed. Our vice chair (then chair) Nigel Collin, encouraged the approach by working with fellow SWP member Camila Avilez on the design of resources - including a leaflet (picture, right) to inform the public of the existence of the project. Surrey Law Firm Charles Russell Speechlys sponsored the production of these and soon they were winging their way to libraries, churches, community centres...in fact anywhere that would take them! In the meantime, SCC reported their intention via their online magazine, "Surrey Matters":

*"A wildflower is a flower that grows in the wild, meaning it was not intentionally seeded or planted. Wildflowers make more than just a pretty photograph. They increase biodiversity, help wildlife thrive (particularly pollinators) and help absorb more carbon. Not to mention their beauty is great for our mental health and pride in our community"*¹

SCC elaborated on their daring new approach:

"We have recently taken over responsibility for highway grass cutting and weed control across the whole of the county, which



has historically been carried out by district and borough councils. Junctions and sightlines will continue to be cut regularly to ensure they are safe for drivers and pedestrians to cross, while other verges will be cut four times a year in urban areas and twice a year in rural locations. We're also supporting the national Blue Campaign Hub which is all about councils and residents across the UK finding land suitable to let nature take over and grow wildflowers.

*How can you get involved? You know your area, so we'd like you to help identify land such as verges or roundabouts which are suitable to be left uncut. If you'd like to get involved you need to pick a location where you believe it will be beneficial for the environment for the grass to be left uncut. Maintain the area by raking or removing annual grass cuttings and picking up litter if it's safe to do so."*¹



SCC also recommended our group! "Follow Surrey's Wildflowering Project UK on Facebook for inspiration". SWP members Sam Reynolds and Jonathan Essex, our SCC contacts, attended our lively "Zoom" meetings and provided invaluable insight.



Surrey Matters featured one of our "street gardens" (picture, left) and over in Bookham, member Diane Poole was encouraging Bookham residents to get involved with wildflowering the verges and a local to make blue heart signs to mark the plots! Diane also produced some wonderful resources to get the public

on board with Blue Hearts and reflowering their verges: <https://www.facebook.com/bookhambluehearts>

Another inspirational group on Facebook, "Wild About Fetcham" led by Caroline Cardew-Smith, shared resources and photographs to inspire local people to appreciate the beauty of the area.

References

1. <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/surrey-matters/magazine/greener-futures/benefits-of-growing-wildflowers?fbclid=IwAR3ojuxP-H8IwKIBYrhOh9WRAW6MUff9APKf6wmhVJkBXV6Rsr8QJlz-P5s>

Early days

Public engagement can be hit and miss at times.

Children and young people were VERY clued up! Most of them have "Eco Councils" at school and Scout/Guide groups have badges for all kinds of interesting projects that come under the big umbrella of "nature".

We had a mixed reaction from the adults; one of our group lamented "the gentleman with the mower is back again".

"Some of our most valuable sources of nectar come from shorter growing native plant species!"



Welcome to our street garden
Our street has grass verge areas managed for pollinators. This is planted and maintained by local families. Enjoy the flowers!

Thank you for cleaning up after your pets
Please do not park on the grass verges



Parkdale Crescent is part of the Surrey County Council Blue Campaign

The gentleman with the mower likes things neat and tidy and there is a happy medium that will delight him. Some of our most valuable sources of nectar come from shorter growing native plant species! They also contribute to the health of the verge - White Clover in particular. We found that the best way was to be kind to neighbours, to talk to them, to listen.

There were setbacks - more about them later.

In our Women's Institutes, interest was peaking. As I write, they have made their resolution in favour of ridding our rivers and seas of sewage!

Nothing gets past these women - they are fearless defenders of nature. In Surrey, husbands, boyfriends, colleagues, brothers, fathers, uncles - have been unwavering in their admiration.

Interest groups in WI's have been busy adopting verges and waste ground, placing their beautifully decorated Blue Hearts and planting crocus for spring.

They have been busy with their chinks too. A series of "Walk, Talk and Chalk" events were held in locations all over Epsom and Ewell. Some of the folklore names for the flowers were chalked on fences and pavements, to the amusement of passers by.



Our projects spring to life across Surrey - SWP in the press

Clockwise: Sustainable Epsom and Ewell press release; report in Epsom and Ewell Times about our verge campaign; local magazine articles by Kim, our chair; Leatherhead and District Countryside Protection Society award the Frank Benger shield: secretary of LDCPS Caroline Cardew-Smith (left) and chair Lucy Quinnell with winners SWP member Diane and her husband Steve; press ad for our Spelthorne group.

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell Sustainable Epsom and Ewell: loc...

Introducing... Surrey's Wildflowering Project

Watching the flowers grow

Volunteer organisation Surrey's Wildflowering Project (SWP) is building a partnership to enable native flowering in the county. Surrey County Council encourage residents to use "Blue Heart" stakes to mark out mini native plant reserves (e.g. around street names and trees). Chair of the project, Kim Spickett, lives in the borough of Epsom and Ewell.

"It is nonsense that street verges have to be overgrown; nectar rich plant species can thrive in 15-20 centimetres. Birds need shorter grass in order to dig for invertebrates. Talk to your neighbours, be kind to each other and find a happy medium!" Kim encourages native plants into the design of her own garden. In front of a riverside pub, the Hogs Mill Tavern, a patch of ground has been awarded "Blue Heart" status. "We enjoy daffodils in the spring and a butterfly sanctuary during the summer. Abdul, the landlord, kindly allows us to fill our watering cans at the pub".

SWP will be at THE BIG DAY OUT community fair and dog show in Cuddington on Saturday, June 17th.
Contact: surreyswildfloweringproject@gmail.com

Published in June 2023 as part of Epsom and Ewell's Green Week, to promote local Green Groups working in the borough of Epsom and Ewell. Read more articles introducing other local Green Groups [here](#).

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service.

NATURAL CUDDINGTON SURREY'S WILDFLOWERS

Do you remember this article (right), penned by NIGEL COLLIN, chair of SURREY WILDFLOWERING PROJECT (SWP)? My involvement has been using "Whitty Walker" to document wildflowers in the borough. I have learned a great deal and kept records. When regulations allowed, I took my Cuddington W.L. pals on wildflower outings. Aside from the flowers themselves, I am interested in animals relying on them for food, shelter and reproduction. There is folklore around them too and (with quaint names like "Hares Eye") we "share" many of these plants with other cultures. Some of these "wild" flowers appeared by accident, as escapes from gardens! I learned that Elizabethans used the sticky liquid from Bluebell stems to starch their ornate collars. To my surprise, poppies produce pollen and not nectar, benefitting tiny pollen beetles. Beetles are food for birds and hedgehogs. The untidy but pretty purple flowered Mallow that invades our verges saved thousands from starvation during the siege of Jerusalem in 1948. In Middle Eastern cookery, the leaves are a useful green, traditionally eaten by Jewish people on their independence day. Red Valerian grows all over Surrey and is reminiscent of sunny Cornish holidays. My case for the defence? A vital food plant, favoured by our enchanting to watch summer visitor, the lovely Hummingbird Hawk Moth. Ivy haters (I do understand that it isn't your favourite) may not know that the hedge bordering the sports pitches at Wandgise is the most important wildlife food source in the area. Cuddington is home to IVY BEE (Colletes hederæ). Their emergence, marked by tiny mounds of soil on your lawn, happens once a year. They won't hurt children or pets. Without ivy flowers, these pretty, vital pollinators can't survive. The black ivy berries that follow are food for colourful visiting winter thrushes from Scandinavia. Do look out for them - they are beautiful! The berries are valuable to other species too. A collection of my photos, notes and drawings will go online early next year.

Kim Spickett
You can contact SWP at:
Nigel Collin: nigel@tab.care
Sam Reynolds: samreynolds@surreycc.gov.uk
Learn more about rewilding: bluecampaignhub.com

Left, top to bottom: starling's face; Poppy & pollen beetle
Centre, top to bottom: Ivy Bee; Fieldfare and Redwing
Right, top to bottom: a dish of steamed mallow leaves with lemon, Red Valerian, Hummingbird Hawk Moth.

NATURAL CUDDINGTON SURREY'S WILDFLOWERS

Do you remember this article (right), penned by NIGEL COLLIN, chair of SURREY WILDFLOWERING PROJECT (SWP)? My involvement has been using "Whitty Walker" to document wildflowers in the borough. I have learned a great deal and kept records. When regulations allowed, I took my Cuddington W.L. pals on wildflower outings. Aside from the flowers themselves, I am interested in animals relying on them for food, shelter and reproduction. There is folklore around them too and (with quaint names like "Hares Eye") we "share" many of these plants with other cultures. Some of these "wild" flowers appeared by accident, as escapes from gardens! I learned that Elizabethans used the sticky liquid from Bluebell stems to starch their ornate collars. To my surprise, poppies produce pollen and not nectar, benefitting tiny pollen beetles. Beetles are food for birds and hedgehogs. The untidy but pretty purple flowered Mallow that invades our verges saved thousands from starvation during the siege of Jerusalem in 1948. In Middle Eastern cookery, the leaves are a useful green, traditionally eaten by Jewish people on their independence day. Red Valerian grows all over Surrey and is reminiscent of sunny Cornish holidays. My case for the defence? A vital food plant, favoured by our enchanting to watch summer visitor, the lovely Hummingbird Hawk Moth. Ivy haters (I do understand that it isn't your favourite) may not know that the hedge bordering the sports pitches at Wandgise is the most important wildlife food source in the area. Cuddington is home to IVY BEE (Colletes hederæ). Their emergence, marked by tiny mounds of soil on your lawn, happens once a year. They won't hurt children or pets. Without ivy flowers, these pretty, vital pollinators can't survive. The black ivy berries that follow are food for colourful visiting winter thrushes from Scandinavia. Do look out for them - they are beautiful! The berries are valuable to other species too. A collection of my photos, notes and drawings will go online early next year.

Kim Spickett
You can contact SWP at:
Nigel Collin: nigel@tab.care
Sam Reynolds: samreynolds@surreycc.gov.uk
Learn more about rewilding: bluecampaignhub.com

Left, top to bottom: starling's face; Poppy & pollen beetle
Centre, top to bottom: Ivy Bee; Fieldfare and Redwing
Right, top to bottom: a dish of steamed mallow leaves with lemon, Red Valerian, Hummingbird Hawk Moth.

NO-MOW-MAY in Surrey

Surrey's Wildflowering Project

No Mow May in Surrey Promoting and celebrating our diverse countryside and urban environments. Volunteer organisation Surrey's Wildflowering Project (SWP) is building a partnership to enable native flowering in the county. SCC already adopt this approach and encourage residents to use "Blue Heart" stakes to mark out mini native plant reserves (e.g. around street names and trees). Leaving a section of street verge a little longer during May can bring a surprising variety of wild flowers naturally - no seed sowing required! Plants of value to wildlife are beautiful; they thrive in shorter verges. Raised blades on mowing equipment can spare them. See Tricks & tips at: surreyswildfloweringproject@gmail.com or find them on Facebook. Chair of the project, Kim Spickett, writes about Epsom & Ewell's wildflowers in her notebook and shares some useful resources to get you started. epsom-ewell-flowerfinder.org

Grow for Wildlife!

Surrey's Wildflowering Project SPRING NOTICEBOARD | 2023

About Surrey's Wildflowering Project

Surrey's Wildflowering Project's aim is to build a partnership that enables wildflowering in our county as well as promoting and celebrating the boroughs'/ districts' diverse countryside and urban environments.

surreyswildfloweringproject@gmail.com
facebook.com/SurreysWildfloweringProjectUK

LOCAL FACEBOOK GROUP:
Spelthorne rewild blue campaign

RESOURCES FOR WILDFLOWERING
epsom-ewell-flowerfinder.org



Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society
April 25, 2022

On such a bright Sunday yesterday, it was my great pleasure as Chair of Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society to visit Bookham to present Diane & Steve Poole with the Frank Benger shield for their achievements with the Blue Hearts scheme. Our Treasurer Michael Herbert and our Secretary Caroline Cardew-Smith also attended (left and right in the group photo), and we enjoyed seeing the resultant swathes of cowslips and buttercups, etc., along with the leafy promises of more wildflowers to come.

The award is made in recognition of outstanding contributions to local countryside protection. Diane and Steve have worked so hard to establish a healthier routine and balance of roadside verge management, so that wildflowers get the chance to thrive for all the beneficial reasons we now know to be essential.

Congratulations and 'thank you' to them and all others involved in getting this off the ground (on the ground!?) locally - not only for the direct benefits but also for the vital awareness and lively debates such activity provokes.

We tip-toed into place beside the flowers, and we were delighted to see a plaque for a stunning tree planted by the L&DCPS in 1969 for its 40th anniversary - an unusual Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron tulipifera). The L&DCPS was founded in 1929 specifically to save Norbury Park. I was reminded when the Queen was ill that on the death of a monarch the Chairman has to plant 10 trees somewhere in Leatherhead, Bookham, Fetcham, Ashted, Mickleham and Headley! The spectacular Indian Bean Tree outside the Lloyds Bank building in Leatherhead is another L&DCPS tree, planted when the last monarch died. Not easy in a crowded era with greater awareness of underground services, etc.! We have also changed our understanding of ecology since then, and thinking among leading scientists leans well away from imported tree-planting (because of the potential for introducing the wrong species in the wrong place along with pests and diseases) and favours natural re-generation, or protection of existing native trees. We are already in discussion around how to modernise and ensure we make 'best practice' choices in our championing of local trees. In our constitution, the word 'tree' doesn't actually feature - they used the expression 'arboreal beauty' instead; when we reviewed the constitution we decided to leave the archaic language in place - it's very special and shows just how much trees were appreciated and treasured by the local folk of the 1920s.

Thanks again, Diane and Steve - well-deserved! And congratulations to Bookham on their roadside displays of wildflowers. I spotted plenty of bees and butterflies...

A setback

SWP members Sam Reynolds (and later Jonathan Essex) headed off to new projects within SCC - we missed them and also their excellent contributions very much.

We were now under the promised new mowing regime, due to start in May 2023.

Initially, feedback was good and we worked hard to get the information out to wildflower enthusiasts, community groups and SWP members.

May 2023 came - and went.

Across the more urban locations, Wall Barley, the wonderful "darts" that we all threw at each other's school cardigans when we were kids, steadily swamped the verges on our suburban streets.

Confusion crept in. SCC confessed that there were operational challenges and that mowing would be later than usual.

When the mowers eventually arrived, the verges were over three feet in some places. Areas that had been mowed by frustrated residents had the usual collection of pretty lawn favourites, growing away healthily and happily.

So what had gone wrong? In simple terms, the flowers we had were suffocated. Wall Barley is a highly competitive annual grass. Once cut, it has completed its life cycle and is dead and gone.

Thatch lined the pavements and gutters. Not a single daisy left.

Comms update:

- Box under "News and Updates" on Surrey County Council Homepage (Surrey.County.Council.surreycc.gov.uk)
- Link to the new Environmental Maintenance update page- [Growing Surrey's grass verges wild for bees and flowers](#). The whole grass cutting area on our website will be updated from April 1st onwards to allow issues/enquiries to be reported for areas other than Elmbridge, Mole Valley and Tandridge which is how it is currently set up.
- Article in Greener Matters- [Read the latest edition of Greener Matters \(ddlnk.net\)](#)
- Article in Surrey Matters- [Surrey Matters magazine - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)
- Toolkit will be shared with D and Bs and Members week commencing 6th March
- Social posts and NextDoor week commencing 6th March
- Newspaper ads lined up in the Surrey Ad and Surrey Mirror for mid-March
- Bus stop posters going out to 300 sites
- Update from Marisa Heath to all D and Bs
- Press release and targeted social media posts to residents in most affected areas (where cuts will be fewer) will go out from day of transfer (1 April)

Service update:

We've used an FAQ approach to provide further information regarding the service itself. If there are other questions you would like an answer to, please contact the SCC Project Manager, Caroline Goodchild (caroline.goodchild@surreycc.gov.uk). We will respond to points raised in future updates and with FAQ responses.

Q: What will we do as part of the Environmental Maintenance Service?

A: Cutting of Highways grass verges, weed spraying and treatment of noxious weeds.

Q: What will we not do as part of the Environmental Maintenance Service?

Learning - and the way forward

Remember the quote from online magazine Surrey Matters?

"A wildflower is a flower that grows in the wild, meaning it was not intentionally seeded or planted. Wildflowers make more than just a pretty photograph. They increase biodiversity, help wildlife thrive (particularly pollinators) and help absorb more carbon. Not to mention their beauty is great for our mental health and pride in our community"

Great mental health and pride in the community was at an all time low during June. It was frustrating to see that all the outreach we had put so much effort into blowing down the street with the straw left by the mowers. Kim, our chair, commented that it was sad to hear how unhappy residents were (she is a ward councillor). Particularly upsetting was speaking to older people who would love to have helped by cutting and clearing up but simply could not manage.

- SCC have listened
- Volunteers push forward with renewed vigour;
- We now know that "leaving it to grow" does NOT work on all verges;
- Gentle cutting once a month during the growing period actually PRESERVES flowers in small, urban verges - we noticed that those cut by residents are blooming; those smothered by Wall Barley are devoid.

Onward and upward! (Steve is still making Blue Hearts like there is no tomorrow - pictured, right)



Events in Surrey - SWP on the road!

SWP members across Surrey have been taking "Flowers to the People"! Armed with some lovely new resources, thanks to a grant from Surrey Climate Commission (<https://www.surreyclimate.org.uk/@SurreyClimate>). We have been able to take part in events by setting up an information table to help the general public to get on board!

Our members' involvement in conservation generally and their involvement with other groups mean that we have some great movements banging the drum for us too! One of these is "Transition Ashtead", a lively and informative Facebook group bringing "everything Eco" to the people of their area (Helen Hore is one of our Ashtead SWP members). Here is a lovely statement about us - thank you, Transition Ashtead!



Transition Ashtead

Transition Ashtead is a small group of local people who are committed to increasing awareness of sustainability through community involvement. We aim to promote different aspects of sustainability through writing articles in the Local Pages and inviting speakers on different topics. Last year we hosted discussions in the APMH on Sustainability in Business, Domestic Solar Generation and Storage and Wildflowering our local spaces. These were well attended and have increased interest in the village.

We are continuing to promote the Surrey-led Blue Hearts scheme and we are looking for Street Champions to claim verges as wildflower and insect refuges. We would welcome new volunteers to join our group. Watch this space as we are planning further events for 2023!

Summer verges are flowering!

We have a number of streets in Ashtead with fantastic displays of wildflowers on the verges, providing food sources for insects. We are investigating a new source for the Blue Hearts and we will update this page as soon as we know more. A little holiday project for kids can be making your own with canes and laminated cardboard! Attached are further ideas for making your own. Don't forget to request no-mow status via the SCC website. (see other PDF).

Get in touch with us via this email transitionashtead23@gmail.com.

New 19/5/2023 - You can download the Ashtead version of the Surrey's Wildflowering Project spring newsletter of how to manage verges and gardens to increase biodiversity. See below.

To get in touch with us, visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/97699089705> or email ashteadra@tiscali.co.uk quoting "Transition Ashtead" in the heading.

Ashtead Blue Hearts <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087883401776>



At SWP we encourage people to make their own events. The QR on the left takes you to a Google "My Map" that we populate with places to see wildflowers. We like to hear from anybody with a project of any size. You don't have to sign up or pay a fee to become a member. Everybody of any age and from anywhere in Surrey can register their patch.



Over in Bookham, one of our project members, Diane Poole of Bookham Blue Hearts Wildflower Verges, gives talks to local groups on Wildlife (and wildflower) Gardening and Blue Heart verges, and Ashtead Wing group followed up with a request for a garden visit. It was an opportunity to put out information on SWP and also to gain a new convert to wildflower verges via the sale of a Blue Heart! A good time was had by all.

Sparking an interest

My online notebook, rather than an identification guide, shares information about wild plants, their unusual relatives, their origins, the animals that rely on them and how they have been utilised by mankind.

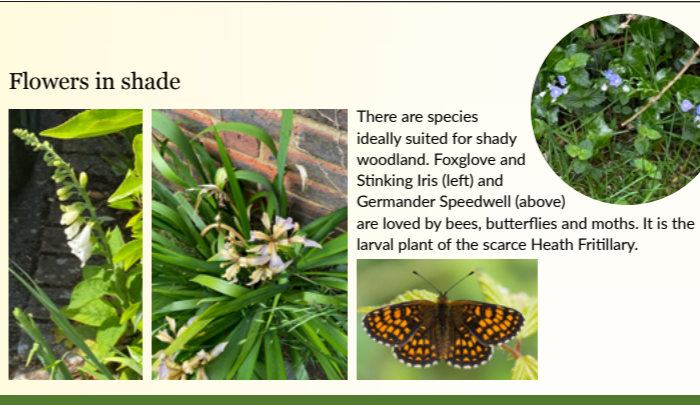


24th March 2022

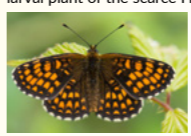
MUSTARD

EPSOM & EWELL FLOWER FINDER

Flowers in shade



There are species ideally suited for shady woodland. Foxglove and Stinking Iris (left) and Germander Speedwell (above) are loved by bees, butterflies and moths. It is the larval plant of the scarce Heath Fritillary.



We presented slide shows to an open event on Zoom, put together by founder members Nigel Collin, Camila Avilez and Sam Reynolds. On the back of this talk, the then vice chair, Kim Spickett, presented to her local W.I. and wrote three local magazine articles about the project.

Wildflower walks in her local area of Epsom and Ewell followed and a collection of resources from Surrey members was curated and added to an online notebook of

native plants found in the area: <https://epsom-ewell-flowerfinder.org>

This resource includes tips for obtaining "Blue Heart" markers for your verge - these tell SCC contractors not to mow.



In June 2023 a summer fair event held in Cuddington, Surrey was a chance to showcase our lovely new resources - thank you Jacquetta Fewster (Coordinator at Surrey Climate Commission) for helping us to make it happen!

Armed with a laptop, a vase containing native flowers and a "seaside pot" of shells, stones and native succulents, we spoke to fair goers and enjoyed the sunshine, fizz and fun! We had plenty of grumbles about the mowing

of our verges and how it had been a bit of a disaster. "Why don't you do it yourself?" Ears began to prick up: "Can I?" The slide show on the iPad took them through the dos and don'ts and they went away clutching the resources we were handing out. The next trick up our sleeve is to hand out seed in the Autumn!

The "seaside pot" really inspired the children. They were old hands at wildlife identification and taught us a thing or two. The grownups had been thrilled when Chris Packham popped up on BBC Springwatch to tell them how good it was to have a wild patch in their gardens, then were peeved when their seeds failed to sprout. "I want flowers like that!" said one, pointing to the vase of native flowers. I explained that they were clay soil specialists - know your soil and use a seed merchant who can supply the right seed. We shared an online map of geology/soil in Surrey to point them in the right direction.

Before the next event, Kim, our chair, organised two field trips in order to keep as current as possible with all things wildflower. The first was a day at Horton Country Park, a Local Nature Reserve in Epsom. The 376 acre park is between two tributaries and contains damp meadow, wood and ponds with Great Crested Newts.

A childrens' farm is adjacent to the park and it is not unusual to see curious camels watching budding naturalists, horse riders and walkers!

Fields here are allowed to grow unmown and support an interesting variety of invertebrates, mammals, reptiles, native plants and birds. Former farm cottages lie near the entrance and one is the headquarters of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Countryside teams. This reserve is also looked after by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Countryside Team Volunteers, The Friends of Horton Country Park and The Lower Mole Partnership.

Countryside team member Pete Howarth spent a day with Kim and Barbara, a wildflower enthusiast living in Dorking, Surrey. Barbara was very keen to increase the wildflower count in her street.

Knowing as much as you can about grasses, sedges and mosses is an important part of keeping a diverse and healthy "patch". A good number of our butterflies rely on grasses to complete their life cycle.

Thank you Pete for an absolutely wonderful day!



HORTON COUNTRY PARK: top, left to right: a native rose that forms part of the hedgerows in the park. The man himself! Pete sets up our classroom for the day. Timothy Grass - one of the all-important plants that make up a healthy meadow. Bottom, left to right: this beautiful wood carving next to one of the water courses depicts the Great Crested Newt. A native orchid: a "cross" - parent plants are Spotted and Marsh Orchid. Plants on the macro scale - Pete finds an enchanting moss for us to identify.

There was a second field trip the end of June when a small group of us visited Mayfield Lavender Farm in Banstead, Surrey. The owners, Brendan and Lorna Maye, have created a successful enterprise that benefits wildlife and is registered with the Soil Association: no pesticides! We spoke to farm workers who are introducing native flowers to the fields; it will be interesting to see how this develops. Mayfield has expanded and has a nursery, orchard and open air theatre in the borough of Epsom and Ewell.



ORGANIC LAVENDER FARM: top, left to right: wild hedgerows surround the fields - a couple of us went rather wild too! Bottom, left to right: native hawkbit growing away happily with the crop. The beautiful but destructive Rosemary Beetle is controlled by picking off during heavy infestations. In the trial beds, rows of lavender are interspersed with rows of native flowers.



Sustainable Epsom and Ewell held their 2023 Eco Fair at the beautiful St Martin of Tours in Epsom Town centre. A rewilded churchyard surrounds this 1450 flint tower church with Victorian and 20th century additions.

The SWP information table featured the usual vase of native flowers, picked from one of our "Street Garden Meadows" in Surrey. This proved to be a good talking point! We also included a slide show on the Ipad to show members of the public adopted wildflower verges, gardens and places to see wildflowers in Surrey's countryside.

We took enquiries from the public and were fortunate to be next to a beekeeper; his excellent honey was a fine advertisement for how important flowers are to all of us!

Our visitors were all ages and all walks of life. One of the first to call in was the Mayor of Epsom, Councillor Robert Geleit, with the Mayoress. We welcomed our first enthusiast from Hooley, Surrey, who is planning to start her own wildflower patch where she lives. A healthcare professional from the local hospital was bored with "all the concrete" had the idea that some native flowering and wildlife would be very good for staff and patients. One of the residents of the town said that her street was a wildlife haven, with bats, badgers and birdsong - a green oasis. This young lady wanted to make it "even better" with native planting. A number of families had tried and failed with spring seed sowing - a familiar story. We were able to advise them. Our



AT THE ECO FAIR: we shared our space with some really enthusiastic subject experts and welcomed many visitors. RIGHT: bees in church!

handouts helped digitally excluded residents who knew nothing about us.

This is a great step forward: our Ashted member, Helen Hore, called in at the event with some wonderful news for us! Her local "Mens Shed" had swung into production, making blue hearts for residents to mark out their roadside projects: <https://menssheds.org.uk>



Future projects

Printing and publishing another resource, explaining sowing in Autumn to kick-start your wildflower planting and how you can incorporate native plants into formal spaces.

Creation of a “seed store” for members of the public where native plant seed can be swapped or purchased.

Teaming up with countryside management staff to deliver educational events.

Creating a document, much like this one, targeted at local business to encourage their involvement.

Producing a video on how to make a blue heart marker for your project.

A thanks to our sponsors

Surrey Climate Commission

Charles Russell Speechlys <https://www.charlesrussellspeechlys.com/en/>

...and finally!

“Our wildflower area at the local park has seen a massive increase in insects, especially bees which is amazing to see. I really hope we manage to do more locally”

SWP member Hazel, on one of the Spelthorne Projects (pictured)





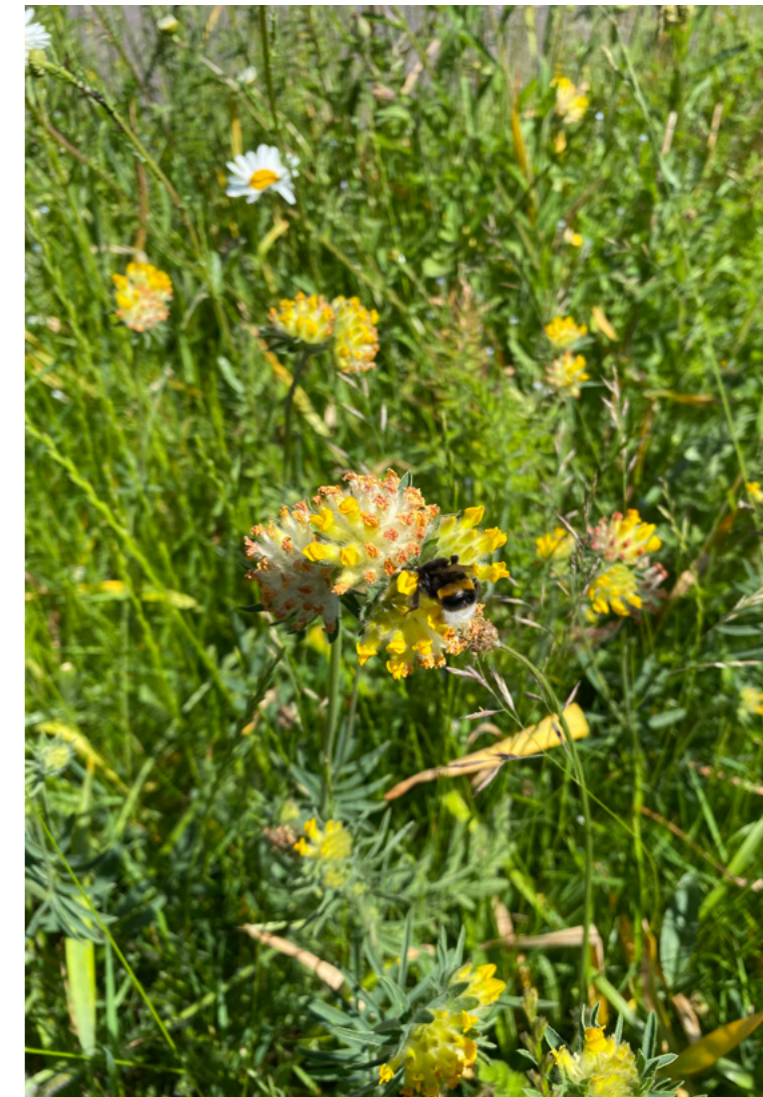
Ashtead

Overdale
Links Road
Miena Way off Links Road
Chaffers Mead (gold standard verge)



Cuddington

Salisbury Road
Parkdale Crescent
Old Malden Lane/Cromwell Road



Bookham

Grange project:

Bee Orchid (top left)

Sainfoin (bottom left)

Old Telephone exchange
(bottom right)

Cowslip area near the Lower Shott
(top right)



Contact us

Surrey's Wildflowering Project

surreyswildfloweringproject@gmail.com

also <https://www.facebook.com/SurreysWildfloweringProjectUK>

What we are doing locally

For the Borough of Epsom & Ewell

<https://epsom-ewell-flowerfinder.org>

For the Blue Heart Project in Bookham

bookhambluehearts@gmail.com

also **Bookham Blue Hearts Wildflower Verges on Facebook**

Wildlife Gardening in Buckland, Surrey

<https://www.bucklandsurrey.net/going-greener/wildlife-friendly-gardening>

Helpful links

No Mow May

<https://nomowmay.plantlife.org.uk>

The Blue Campaign for grass verges

<https://bluecampaignhub.com> and roadverges.plantlife.org.uk

For Parish Churches

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

RHS Creating and Maintaining Wildflower Meadows

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/lawns/wildflower-meadow-establishment> and

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/lawns/wildflower-meadow-maintenance>

Wildflower seed for sale

<https://www.wildflower.co.uk>

Wildflowers with Surrey Wildlife Trust

<https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/explore/where-see-wildlife/summer-wildlife/wonderful-wildflowers>

Wildflowers with Kew

<https://growwild.kew.org>

