

# Planting for Wildlife

This is the time of year when gardeners start growing their seeds or buying plants. The plants you grow in your garden can have a big affect on the bees and butterflies you attract. Not all flowers have nectar and some are inaccessible for bees and butterflies. A good general rule is to have open, simple flowers which are not too "frilly". One of my favourite annuals is Cosmos, shown opposite, which is easy to grow from seed and lasts into the autumn.



There are lots of perennials and bi-annuals which pollinators love like the perennial cornflower opposite and the Foxglove ( below right). The Foxglove is a good example of a tubular shaped flower which is also accessible. Different types of bees have different length tongues so a wide variety of flowers should give something for everyone. Flowering shrubs can also be very good for bees and butterflies.



It is also good to have some wild flowers in your garden as they can provide the food plants for the caterpillars of butterflies and moths as well as nectar and pollen. The Wild Mallow (below left) appeared in my garden by accident but I have let it stay as it is so pretty and the pollinators love it. It is also the food plant for the caterpillars of the Painted Lady butterfly.

There are several ways to find out what to plant. There is plenty of information available on line if you search for "plants for pollinators". There is a particularly comprehensive list on the RHS website. At the garden centres look for the bee logo and look to see which plants are being visited by pollinators. The more plants you have in your garden which are good for pollinators the more insects will arrive.



Unfortunately it is very difficult to buy plants which have not been treated with pesticides but it is possible to avoid them in the garden and give the insects a safe habitat. Healthy plants will usually tolerate some insect life on them and it will not be long before the predators arrive to eat them. For example aphids will be eaten by ladybirds if you can wait a while.



The safest way to avoid pesticides, if you are able to, is to grow your own plants from seed, cuttings or by splitting plants. It is better for the environment if you can use a peat free compost or even compost you have made yourself.

If all this sounds like a big change to make, why not try to do it in small steps, every little helps!