

KENT'S PLAN BEE



August 2023 Summary Newsletter

Watch out for Asian Hornets

As you may have seen in the news, Asian hornet sightings in Kent and across the UK have been rising rapidly this summer. Kent's Plan Bee have been following this increase in Asian hornet activity and to help raise awareness of the issue, we sent out a special update with all the information you needed on Asian hornets.

As the foliage dies off in September, it is a good opportunity to start spotting their nests. Given the incredible amount of damage even a small number of Asian hornets can do, it is important to report any suspected sightings of this species as soon as possible. Being that much closer to France, the Kent coastline is one of the locations that they are likely to reach first, as it is thought they are being carried over the Channel by the wind.

There are several methods to record any potential Asian hornet sightings. Ideally, sightings should be reported via the free mobile apps:

- [Asian Hornet Watch app for iPhone](#)
- [Asian Hornet Watch app for android](#)

Sightings can also be reported via [the Online Recording Form](#) or by emailing

Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina* (also known as yellow legged hornet)
An invasive hornet from Asia which poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators. Often confused with native hornets, see below for life size comparison highlighting key features:



Vespa velutina ✗ Non-native *Vespa crabro* ✓ Native to UK

Illustrations by Sarah Bunker



Legs:	Yellow at ends	Brown
Head:	Black from above, orange face	Brown from above, yellow face
Thorax:	Black and velvety	Black and brown
Abdomen:	Mainly black with one obvious yellow/orange band	Mainly yellow with black bands, spots marks like 'dripping paint'
Activity:	Never active at night	May be active at night

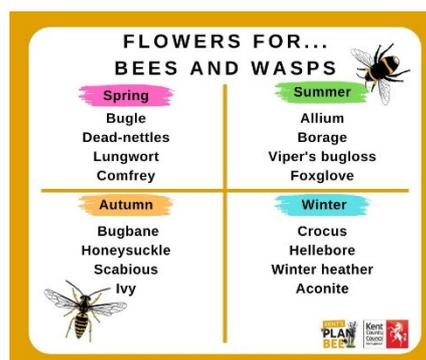
Do not disturb active nests. Report sightings via free iPhone and Android app: [Asian Hornet Watch](#).
Online at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet or by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.
Further information on honey bee health available at: www.nationalbeeunit.com Tel: 0300 303 0094

Photo credit: Animal and Plant Health Agency

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Where possible, a photo to help with identification is useful but do not put yourself at risk. Although not considered especially aggressive, Asian hornets can sting and care needs to be taken when in close proximity to them, especially around their nests. Please do not disturb an active nest.

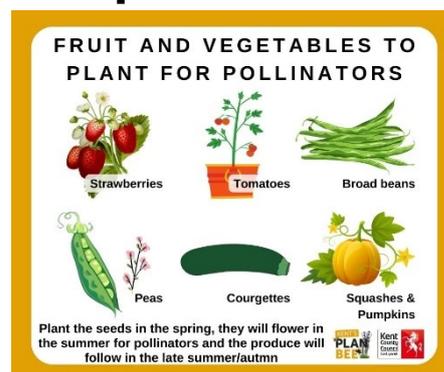
Flowers for Pollinators



We broke down in August which flowers across each season you can plant to help feed all the pollinator groups. Depending on their tongue length, all pollinators will require different flowers to collect nectar from. Some, like moths, also require flowers that open at different times of the day. By providing a variety of flowers all year round, all pollinators will be able to feed and flourish, easily moving from one green space to the next. You can provide flowers all year round for all pollinators in your garden, allotment, balconies, windowsills, wherever you have space! Just have a selection of the flowers from our handy cheat sheet attached to the end of this newsletter to help pollinators whatever the season.

National Allotment Week – Managing allotments for pollinators

We celebrated National Allotment week at the beginning of August. Did you know that some fruit and vegetables can have nectar and pollen-rich flowers that pollinators love and the more flowers you have in your garden, the more pollinators you can support. In return, the pollinated flowers turn into produce for you to eat later in the year. Feeding the bees helps to feed you, it's a win-win situation! As well as planting fruit and vegetables, you can also plant companion plants, provide shelter and water, and reduce the chemicals you use on your allotment to support pollinators. Download our guide on how to make you're allotment more pollinator friendly from our Facebook [post](#).



No Mow May – what can you do to prepare for next year?

If you want to get more out of your No Mow May lawn next year, here are a few simple steps you can take this autumn to improve the number of flowers in your lawn.

Collect Seeds

Seeds develop after a flower has been pollinated, this is usually 6 to 8 weeks after pollination occurs. As different species flower at different times of the year, you could be collecting different seeds from spring right the way through to autumn. However, if you have left your lawn uncut since May, then September is a great time to collect seeds, especially before cutting it all back for the winter.



Check to see if your seeds are ready. Remove a few seeds from a dried flower head into your hand. Usually if they are brown and dry, they are ready, but a good way to check is to break the seed open with your nail. If you hear the seed crack or “click” open, then the seed coat has formed, and the seed is ready.

In order to store your seeds long term, you will need to:

1. Collect your seeds into paper or cloth bags, or open tubs so they can breathe. Remember to label each one with the species and date of collection. You will want to do this at every step so not to mix them up.
2. Once inside, tip them onto a tray and remove any leaves, stalks, insects etc.
3. Leave the seeds on the tray (or hang in a breathable bag) in a warm airy place out of direct sunlight and mice who will eat the seeds. This naturally dries out the seeds further.
4. After a few weeks, remove the chaff (this is the protective seed casing that has dried and fallen off). Putting them through sieves and colanders with different sized holes will be great for this.
5. Once the seeds are clean, inspect them for insects or other pests to prevent them from eating through your seed collection. You may need a hand lens/magnifying glass for this. Remove any infested seeds.
6. Put your dry seeds into an air-tight container. You can add silica sachets if you have them to remove any moisture in the air. Dry and cool is best for seeds, so storing them in the fridge or in a mouse-proof container in the shed over winter away from direct sunlight will both work.

Cut your Lawn



Once you have collected your seeds at the start of autumn, it's time to cut back all that summer growth! September is a great time to mow after the summer period as by then all the flowering will have finished and most of them gone to seed.

You can either cut your lawn with a lawn mower or try traditional cutting with a scythe. Note that you will probably need to cut your lawn twice with a mower with the blades adjusted to the highest setting first so as not to overwhelm it. You could use a strimmer for the first cut.

Whatever method of cutting you go for, remember to:

- Watch out for wildlife – Make sure to hand search through the grass prior to cutting, then start cutting in parallel to a safe space for wildlife to move towards as you are cutting. Start from a path or the most used part of the garden, to give wildlife a chance to move away.
- Remove any grass clippings – as cut grass breaks down, the nutrients stored in the grass return to the soil, increasing the fertility of the soil. Collecting up the grass clippings will reduce the nutrients going back into the soil, allowing the wildflowers a chance to bloom with reduced competition from the nutrient-loving grasses. As you remove them, shake the clippings to let any seeds drop out back into the lawn.
- You don't have to cut everywhere at once – it can be beneficial to not cut all of your lawn to the same length at the same time. Split your garden into zones and mow each zone a week after each other to create a mosaic of habitats with different grass lengths.

Prepare your lawn for sowing

Seeds need direct contact with soil to germinate. If starting with a full lawn of grass and sowing seeds directly, remove the top few centimetres of turf and break the soil up a little with a fork. You can also plant your flowers as partially grown plugs (or seedlings you have grown yourself from seed) at random intervals in a recently mown lawn but removing a little bit of grass to avoid the plugs getting crowded out will help them establish nicely.



Sow Seeds

Autumn is the perfect time to sow seeds. Once you have prepared your lawn as above, just sprinkle on the seeds and keep them well-watered until the plants are established.

Final Prep before May

After winter and just before the new spring growth starts (late February-early March), cut back all the winter growth. This will allow your seeds the perfect start to germination, with less competition from surrounding vegetation and more access to sunlight.



Further information: [How-to-guide Collecting and using pollinator friendly wildflower seed – All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#) [Let it Bloom June: No Mow May is Over, What's Next? – Plantlife blog](#) [Scything – Emorsgate Seeds](#) [Simple Ways to Increase the Number of Wildflowers in Your Lawn – Plantlife blog](#)

Pollinators to see in September

With the start of autumn, pollinator activity begins to wind down.

Bees: Ivy Mining Bees are one of the last bees of the year to appear, timed to make the most of ivy flowers.

Moths: Fisher's Estuarine moth (a real rarity and one of the Kent's Magnificent Moths), The Herald, Garden Carpet, Plume moths, and Elephant Hawk moth caterpillars.

Butterflies: Red Admiral, Comma and Holly Blues are usually all on the wing as second brood adults.

Beetles: Rose Chafers are one of the last beetles of the year to see, making the most of September flowers.

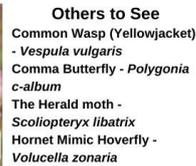
Wasps: German Wasp, Common Wasp, Red wasp, Tree wasp & European hornet seem more common as they leave the social nests. Many Ichneumonid solitary wasps are still about too.

Flies/ hoverfly: Hornet Mimic Hoverflies, Drone flies and Green Bottles are still to be seen on September's flowers.

Wildflowers to spot this month include Autumn Gentian, Bristly Oxtongue, Corn Marigold, Devil's-bit Scabious, Fleabane, Herb-Robert, Harebell, Hemp Agrimony, Ivy, Red Bistort, and Yarrow.

Spotted any of these or any other pollinators and wildflowers? Post them on our [Facebook page](#), tag us in your photos @KentsPlanBee or [email us](#) your photos.

POLLINATORS TO SEE IN SEPTEMBER



Others to See
Common Wasp (Yellowjacket) - *Vespula vulgaris*
Comma Butterfly - *Polygonia c-album*
The Herald moth - *Scoliopteryx libatrix*
Hornet Mimic Hoverfly - *Volucella zonaria*

Spotted any of these? Why not share them on our Facebook page @KentsPlanBee



Upcoming Events and Resources

Wild About Open Gardens

The Wild About Open Garden events are finishing! The final event in September is taking place on 16th near Faversham. Book onto this and other events through the [Kent Wildlife Trust website](#).

Open Gardens

Kent Wildlife Trust

SAT 16 SEP 1-5pm: Langdon Court, near Faversham

Suggested donation £5 on entry
Cash & cheques only

More details can be found by scanning the QR code or visit:
<https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens>
Alternatively call 01622 662012

Scan to find out more

Wildlife advice
Refreshments
Plant stall

Or call 01622 662012

Search for the Fisher's Estuarine Moth

Join the Kent's Magnificent Moths team on 29th September to help survey for the rare Fisher's Estuarine moth.

FISHER'S ESTUARINE MOTH EVENING SURVEY

Friday 29th September 2023

Along Marine Parade, opposite Lyndhurst Rest Home
(What3Words: frame.fleet.digit)

Join the Kent's Magnificent Moths team to see this elusive, rare moth!

This moth is only found in North Essex and along the North Kent coastline, with Tankerton Slopes being the only stronghold population in Kent.

We will be searching the Hog's Fennel and coarse grasses along the slopes to hopefully see them flying.

Please **WRAP UP, WEAR STURDY SHOES AND BRING A TORCH!**



Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Keep up to date with the latest news via our [Kent's Plan Bee Facebook page](#)

If you received this email indirectly and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Sign Up". If you wish to unsubscribe from this mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Unsubscribe".

Do you have a Kent pollinator news story or event that you would like featured in our newsletter? Have you created a pollinator friendly community space? Got your neighbours together to create a row of pollinator friendly gardens? Or do you have an event about Kent's pollinators you would like advertised? Email it to the address below and we will be in contact about a potential space in the Newsletter.

planbee@kent.gov.uk

All the previous editions of the Newsletter have now been added to our webpage. You can download them as PDFs or share the website address on your social media. Find all the Newsletters on the [Pollinators section of Kent County Council's website](#).

Edited by Hannah Simmons, Graduate Biodiversity Officer, Kent County Council.

For a Pollinator Friendly Garden of England



PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

Nectar is a valuable fuel that keeps pollinators going, and they get this as a reward from the flowers they pollinate. Plant these flowers to help feed the different pollinators living in your garden all year round:

Pollinators	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Bees and Wasps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bugle Dead-Nettles Lungwort Comfrey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allium Borage Viper's Bugloss Foxglove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ivy Bugbane Honeysuckle Scabious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crocus Hellebore Winter Heather Aconite 
Butterflies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bugle Forget-me-not Lungwort Primrose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird's Foot Trefoil Buddleia Marjoram Lavender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knapweeds Ivy Hemp Agrimony Honeysuckle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goat Willow Winter Heather Snowdrop 
Moths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweet Rocket Ragged Robin Bird cherry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddleia Night-scented Stock Borage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honeysuckle Jasmine Evening Primrose Ivy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahonia Blackthorn Gorse 
Beetles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daisies Cow Parsley Tansy Garlic mustard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wild Carrot St John's Wort Rose Fennel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cornflowers Ivy Meadowsweet Wild carrot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holly Witch hazel Winter daphne Colt's-foot 
Flies & Hoverflies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daisies Cow Parsley Euphorbia Dandelion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rose Feverfew Green alkanet Marjoram 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunflower Sedum Hemp agrimony Blackberry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crocus Mahonia Willows Gorse 

Don't forget to provide shelter, larval food plants and nesting sites in your garden too!

For a Pollinator Friendly Garden of England

