

KENT'S PLAN BEE



March 2022 Summary Newsletter

Straw Belle moth in Lydden

Great news for the Straw Belle moth, *Aspitates gilvaria*, in Kent, as [Lydden Temple Ewell National Nature Reserve](#) is named the best strong hold for the moth in the UK. This comes from a recent Butterfly Conservation report using survey data from 2021.

Lydden is managed by [Kent Wildlife Trust](#), who lightly cattle graze the site to create a patchwork of habitats for both the adult and larval stages. The Straw Belle is only found in 9 sites across the country, 3 of which Kent Wildlife Trust manage here in Kent.

Straw Belle can be identified from their straw-yellow forewings and is found in unimproved chalk grassland with south-facing slopes. Adults are on the wing from mid-June to August.

The Straw Belle moth is a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. As well as Kent Wildlife Trust managing some of their sites for the Straw Belle, the moth is one of the priority species for the [Kent's Magnificent Moths](#) project run by Butterfly Conservation. With habitat restoration and management happening across Kent, the Straw Belle looks set to stay in Kent for a little while longer.



Surveying Techniques

There are plenty of ways to look for and record your pollinator sightings this Spring. Here are some different citizen science surveys and techniques you can use:

- UK [Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#) (POMS) Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) Counts – 10-minute surveys to record insects visiting flowers
- Buglife's "[The Bugs Matter](#)" survey – record the number of insects on your car number plate
- [Butterfly transects](#) – record butterflies along a set route
- [Moth trapping](#) – use lights to see which moths are living in your garden. Start now to be ready for Moth Night in May
- [Pitfall traps](#) – a hole in the ground is good for catching larvae and pollinators that struggle to fly
- [Sweep netting](#) – to see pollinators that are resting in long grass



Getting Ready for No Mow May



Will you be taking part in No Mow May this year?

It's simple, put the lawnmower away and leave some or all your lawn to grow wild. At the end of the month, see which flowers have appeared.

We'll be bringing you a fun-filled, jam-packed month in next month's newsletter and on our Facebook page, with stories from the residents of Kent, along with how you can get involved this year.

Want to get ahead and start planning? Check out our [Resources and Information Facebook photo album](#) to find our top tips for [managing your lawn for pollinators](#), [adding wildflowers to your lawn](#) and much more on how you can help pollinators.

Growing Fruit and Vegetables for Pollinators

Recently, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust have released their [Bee the Change guide](#) on which fruit and vegetables to plant to help bumblebees. We love this idea and want to bring you a few snippets of what you can do this April in your allotment or garden vegetable patch to help pollinators.

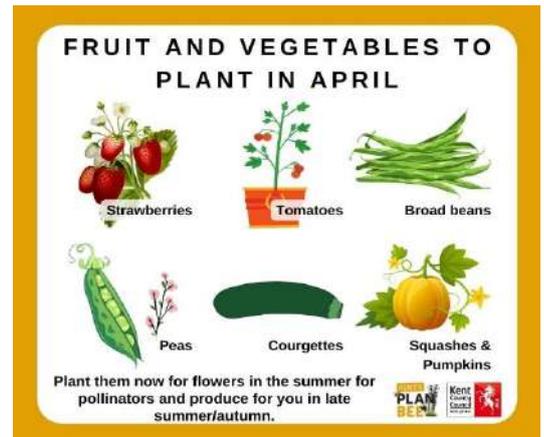
How growing fruits and vegetables helps pollinators?

Fruit and vegetables have nectar and pollen-rich flowers that pollinators love, plus 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!

Who can grow them?

Anyone can grow their own, no matter what space you have. Whether you have room for a greenhouse and vegetable plot, to a few pots and a windowsill box, there is something for everyone, and all of it goes to helping pollinators.

Which fruit and vegetables to sow/plant in April: Strawberries, Tomatoes, Broad Beans, Peas, Courgettes, Squash & Pumpkin.



Companion Plant	Grow with	Helps by
 Nasturtiums	Beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being a sacrificial plant as caterpillars & aphids eat these instead of beans. Attracting hoverflies to prey on pests.
Mint and other strong-smelling herbs	Tomatoes, Squashes, & Courgettes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confusing & repelling many pests with their strong smells
 Marigold /Calendula	Courgettes, Tomatoes & Beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repelling whitefly and luring aphids away from beans
Borage	Tomatoes & Strawberries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting pollinators to fertilise the flowers Enhancing the flavour of strawberries
Summer Savory	Broad bean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detering blackfly

As an added bonus, all of these companion plants are edible and make great additions to salads, drinks, and cooked dishes.

What is good about Companion Planting?

Companion planting is a great way of repelling pests from your fruit and veg, as well as making the most of the space by planting more edible plants. It is also a bonus for pollinators, with many of their favourites being a companion plant, they'll come from miles around for the abundant flower food source in your garden. It's great for you as your fruit and veg will get pollinated, saving you the time of doing it by hand and providing you with produce and seeds for the following year.

Companion Plants to sow/plant in April: Nasturtiums, Mint & other strong-smelling herbs, Marigolds/Calendula, Borage, Summer Savory. As a bonus, all these companion plants are edible, and make great additions to salads, drinks, and cooked dishes.

Other things you can do in your growing garden and allotment to help pollinators:

Go organic ([pesticide & chemical free](#)) – chemicals used to keep pests away cannot differentiate between an unwanted insect & vital pollinator. Use companion planting to keep some pests away & provide habitat/shelter close by for the pest's natural predators (such as ladybirds & hoverflies) who will love having an all-you-can eat buffet on their doorstep.

Don't use peat compost – removing peat from the environment not only destroys peat bogs as habitats, but it also releases carbon into the atmosphere that has been locked up over 1000s of years, adding to climate change. Look for peat-free compost at the garden centre, or better still, create your own from your garden waste.

Further reading and resources:

Gardener's World [Companion Planting](#), Wildlife Trust [guide to growing a wildlife friendly vegetable garden](#)

What to see in April

April signals the beginning of spring and the emergence of most spring pollinators.

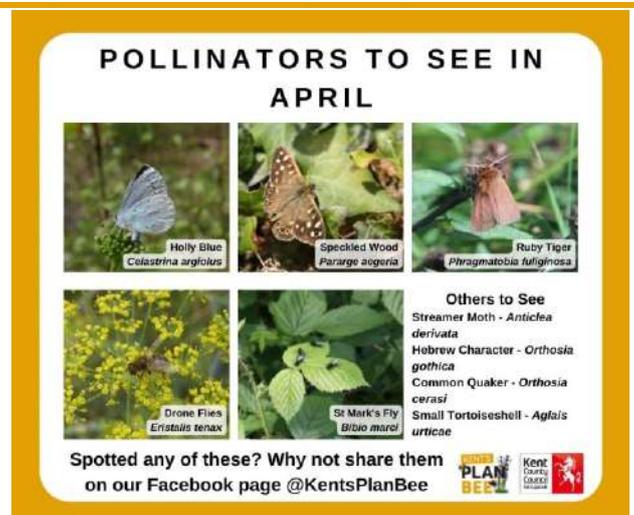
Bumblebees to emerge early/mid spring (aside from Buff-tailed) are Early, Tree, Red-tailed & Garden bumbles. Spring **solitary bees** to look out for include Ashy mining bee, Tawny mining bee, Orange-legged furrow bee, Common furrow bee, & Green furrow bee.

Adult moths to look for include Ruby Tiger, Streamer Moth, Brimstone, Hebrew Character, & Common Quaker. **Butterflies** include Holly Blue, Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Brimstone, & Small Tortoiseshell.

Let's not forget **flies**, with Drone flies, St Mark's Fly (celebrated on St Mark's Day 25th April), plus the bee mimic, the Dark-edged Bee Fly, all on the wing in April.

Wildflowers to spot this month include Bugle, Cowslips, Lesser Celandine, Primrose, Violets, Wood Anemone & Wild Garlic.

Spotted any of these or any other pollinators and wildflowers? Post them on our Facebook page or tag us in your photos @KentsPlanBee.



Bugle, Cowslip & Wild Garlic

