

KENT'S PLAN BEE



October 2023 Summary Newsletter

Kent's Plan Bee celebrates its 10th anniversary

October marks 10 Years of Kents Plan Bee!

Since its conception in 2013, Kent's Plan Bee has gone from strength to strength. Having been formally adopted in 2019 by Kent County Council, Kent's Plan Bee is positively impacting the way the council manages its land, from making changes to our verge management to finding sites to take part in No Mow May.

We have been celebrating on our [Facebook page](#), hearing from some of our officers, members, and partners on how Kent's Plan Bee has changed the way they work to help Kent's pollinators.



Halls Hole Rd - Roadside Nature Reserve



Wildflowers at Brockhill Country Park



Since the formal adoption of Kent's Plan Bee by Kent County Council in 2019, we have achieved lots of actions. These include:

- 🌸 This year for No Mow May, Kent County Council put aside about 300 hectares of wildflower-rich grassland
- 🚌 Urban verge management for pollinators along Fastrack's dedicated and shared bus route in the Dartford area
- 🌿 Some of our rural Highway's verges are now on different grass cutting regimes to benefit wildflowers and pollinators
- ♻️ Supporting pollinators at our waste sites
- 🐝 Kent County Council's country parks are managed for the benefit of biodiversity, and pollinators are an integral part of this activity
- 💬 Raising awareness and mobilising the people of Kent through our Facebook page and this newsletter

This is just a small fraction of all the amazing work we have managed to achieve. To find out more about Kent's Plan Bee, please visit [our website](#). Also head to our [Facebook page](#) to read the quotes submitted by our team and partners.

Mental Health Activities

As part of Mental Health day (10 October), we put together a list of activities that benefit both pollinators and your mental health. These are based on the 5 ways to wellbeing as promoted by the NHS which are:

- Give - Give a little bit of your garden over to nature and leave it untidy
- Learn - Start a Nature Journal
- Be active - Sow Wildflower Seeds or make a Pollinator Planter
- Take notice - Draw a Pollinator
- Connect - Join a conservation task day or survey day

How many of these do you already do, or have you been inspired to try one of these activities?

For more information on each of these activities and what they do for your mental health, check out our [Facebook page](#).

ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT POLLINATORS & MENTAL HEALTH

Learn Start a Nature Journal	Take Notice Draw a Pollinator
Give Give a little bit of your garden over to nature and leave it untidy	
Be Active Sow Wildflower Seeds or make a Pollinator Planter	Connect Join a conservation task day or survey day

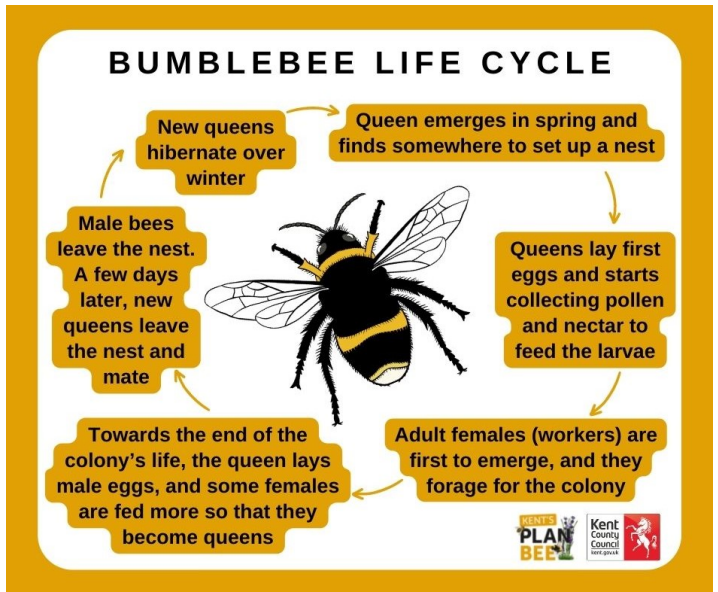
A gardener's guide to buff-tailed bumblebees

Buff-tailed bumblebees probably visit your garden as they are quite widespread. If your garden is good for buff-tails, it will also benefit other pollinators.

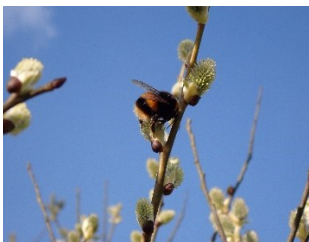
Lifecycle of buff-tails

Buff-tailed bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation as early as February. Sometimes they are active in winter. When they emerge, queen bees urgently need nectar for energy and protein in pollen to enable them to lay eggs.

Buff-tailed queens often make their nests underground in old rodent holes. You may also find their nests under sheds, decking or patios and in compost heaps. Queens collect pollen and nectar to feed the first larvae. Once the first larvae have pupated and emerged as worker bees, she leaves the foraging to them. Eventually she lays eggs that will develop into males and new queens. The males leave the nest and mate with new queens who feed voraciously to prepare for future egg-laying. The old colony dies off and the new queens establish their own nests, or if they are from a late brood, find somewhere underground to hibernate.



Every part of the garden can help buff-tailed bumblebees:



Buff-tail on Pussy Willow

Hedges, walls, and fences

Hedges are good habitat for small mammals. Their old holes provide nest and hibernation sites for buff-tails.

Trees and shrubs providing good forage for buff-tails include: willows, berberis, flowering currant, holly, winter-flowering daphnes and viburnums.

Make the most of your vertical space by planting climbers. Ivy, winter-flowering clematis, and jasmine provide forage during the harshest times.

Borders and plants in pots

Although they are relatively short-tongued, buff-tails feed on a wide range of flowers. They cleverly bite through tubular flowers to steal food that they could not otherwise reach such as salvia 'Hot Lips'. Large clumps enable efficient feeding. Try campanulas, echinops, eryngium, foxgloves, heaths, and heathers, scabious and veronica. Viper's bugloss loves poor soil and is a great source of nectar.



Buff-tail on Viper's bugloss

Lawns and mini meadows

Long grass can encourage nesting. Enhance pollen and nectar supplies with meadow flowers such as bird's-foot trefoil, dandelions, knapweed, scabious, vetches, and white clover. Crocuses are important for early spring foraging.

The fruit and vegetable patch

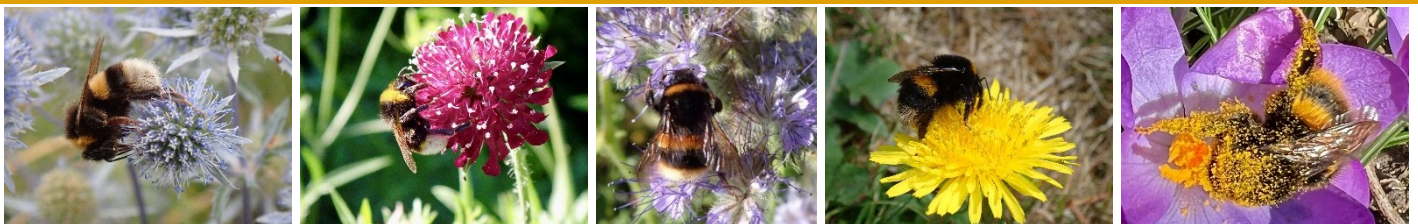
Blackberry, currant, and raspberry flowers are great buff-tail forage. Buff-tails also love comfrey and phacelia (used as green manures) and borage. Vegetables left to flower, such as turnips are also good forage.

Water

A shallow dish of water containing pebbles allows bees to drink safely.



Buff-tail on Blackberry



Buff-tails on Eryngium, Knautia Macedonica, Phacelia, Dandelion, and Crocus

Further information

[Gardening for a Wilder Kent](#) [Bumblebee Conservation Trust: Gardening for Bumblebees](#)

[Bumblebee Conservation Trust: Bumblebee nests](#)

[Bumblebee Conservation Trust: Bumblebee lifecycle](#)

[RHS: Plants for Pollinators](#)

Thank you to our wonderful Wild About Gardens volunteer Penny Brook for writing this month's article. Photo credits: P Brook

Pollinators to see in Winter

November sees many pollinators already hunkering down for the winter. There are a few exceptions where hangers-on from the summer may be seen, such as Common Carder Bees, Red Admirals, and Common and German Wasps. A few new species of moth can be seen, including Dark Chestnut, November Moth, December Moth, Mottled Umber, and Feathered Thorn.

The majority of pollinators you will likely spot are those that overwinter as adults. On milder days, you may see:

Bees: Buff-tailed Bumblebees

Moths: Herald, Winter moth, and Common Plume

Butterflies: Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, and Comma

Flies: Marmalade hoverfly, Common drone flies, and Greenbottles

Wildflowers have also mostly stopped blooming, but a few hardy species carry on over the winter. Those to spot over winter include Gorse, Common Chickweed, Groundsel, Red Dead-nettle, Shepherd's purse, and White Dead-nettle. The Gorse and Dead-nettle flowers are important nectar sources if pollinators do venture out on warmer days.

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

POLLINATORS TO SEE IN WINTER



Buff-tailed bumblebee
Bombus terrestris



Peacock
Aglais io



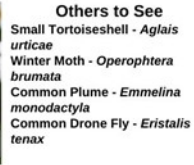
Comma
Polygonia c-album



The Herald
Scoliopteryx libatrix



Marmalade Hoverfly
Epsirphus balteatus



Others to See
Small Tortoiseshell - *Aglais urticae*
Winter Moth - *Operophtera brumata*
Common Plume - *Emmeline monodactyla*
Common Drone Fly - *Eristalis tenax*

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



Events in November

Tree Week

[Tree Week](#) happens on the last week of November, going into December (25 Nov - 3 Dec). It is the UK's largest annual tree celebration, run by the Tree Council. This week marks the start of winter tree planting season. We'll be posting lots of activities and information on our Facebook page throughout November in the run up to and on Tree Week itself.

How are your New Year's Resolutions for Pollinators going?

Did you set yourself a goal to help pollinators more this year? Whether you have taken part in a survey or added a pollinator-friendly section to your garden, we would love to hear how it is going and what you have been up to!

We will be reviewing all your amazing work in December to help inspire others to take up the challenge next year. Head over to [our Let's Talk page](#) to share your activities.

Wild About Gardens

The online workshops are back! There are two events happening in November. You can book onto these events through the [Kent Wildlife Trust website](#).

14 November 730pm - Managing garden pests and disease in a nature-friendly way

18 November 3pm - Building and maintaining a garden wildlife pond

Milton Creek Wildlife Group

To help add to the records and monitor the local wildlife of Milton Creek a new ecology survey group has been formed. The next survey walk will be at 10am on **Sunday 19 November**. Starting at the Gas Road entrance, the survey will be walking along the creek to concentrate on bird sightings over the winter, but recording anything of interest – hopefully, a few buff tails.

Please [email the Milton Creek group](#) if you are interested in attending the wildlife surveys.



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

