

# Insect Interest

### Attracting Insects

Butterflies and bees are some of Britain's most colourful wildlife. Much loved by children and adults, their high dependency on a limited number of plants makes them especially vulnerable in a changing landscape where habitats and food plants are being lost. This has unfortunately led to the extinction of some species, whilst others are in decline.

Bumblebees are insects of temperate climates. Quite different than honey bees and solitary bees, they live in small colonies of up to 200-300 and with their densely furry bodies can be active even in dull conditions. They are constantly, foraging for nectar and pollen, helping to pollinate flowers as they do so. Up to 25 species of bumblebee live in the UK, covering a wide range of habitat from moorland to coastal areas. Bumblebee numbers have halved in the last fifty years, with three species now extinct and nine endangered. The reason for this dramatic decline is mainly due to the reduction of wild flowers in the countryside, which means less food for our bees and other insects.

However, business sites can offer these enigmatic creatures real hope if a variety of plants are grown in sunny, sheltered spots. To help you create a colourful border attractive to butterflies and bees we have provided a few hints and tips and a list of suitable plants. Many of the plants will be attractive to a variety of other insects. These in turn will provide natural food for birds and bats, especially if a few night-scented plants are included for nocturnal moths.



### Planning a Nectar Border for Bees and Butterflies.



- Select a site:

Choose a sunny, sheltered spot. Butterflies need the sun to warm them up and get them going. They will not visit flowers in the shade and enjoy basking in the sun.

- Choosing your plants:

Pick some that flower in spring, summer and autumn to provide a continuous supply of nectar. Old-fashioned varieties tend to be more nectar-rich, whilst double flowers and new hybrids have very little.

- Planting:

Flying takes up a lot of energy – a third of bumblebee's daily energy

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intake is spent foraging for more nectar and pollen. Plant groups of the same species in 3s or 5s. This will give a strong visual sign to passing bees & butterflies and provide better scent.

- Shrubs:

Grow a variety of pollen and nectar rich shrubs at the rear of your borders.

- Caterpillars:

Include some food plants for the young, without these butterflies will continue to decline. Nettles in sunny locations will host the caterpillars of the peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell and comma.

Nectar Rich Plants for the Herbaceous Border		
Spring Flowering	Summer Flowering	Autumn Flowering
Alyssum	Verbena	Lavender
Cowslip	Thyme	Russian sage
Grape hyacinth	Marjoram	Michaelmas daisies
Honesty	Yarrow	Ice plant
Primrose	Betony	Fuchsia
Aubrietia	Goldenrod	Red valerian
Forget-me-not	Tickweed (Coreopsis)	Catmint
Leopard's Bane	Globe thistle	Phlox
Polyanthus	Fleabane	Scabious
Wallflower	Cranesbill	Monkshood?

### Amazing Bee Facts

- Honey bees can fly up to 5 miles from the hive in search of food.
- It takes about 2 million flowers being tapped by bees to make just 1 pound of honey!
- In one trip a honey bee will visit about 50 to 100 flowers.
- Some bumblebees can carry up to 75% of their own body weight in pollen and nectar.
- Initially bumblebees prefer violet and blue coloured flowers, until they get used to the process.



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Nectar Rich Border Shrubs	
Blue Spiraea ( <i>Caryopteris Clandonensis</i> )	Lavender ( <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> )
Butterfly Bush ( <i>Buddleia davidii</i> )	Globe buddleia ( <i>Buddleia globosa</i> )
Rosemary ( <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> )	Hebe ( <i>Hebe salicifolia</i> )
Honeysuckle ( <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> )	Heather ( <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> )
Barberry ( <i>Berberis thunbergii</i> )	Mallow ( <i>Lavatera arborea</i> )
Escallonia ( <i>Escallonia 'Langleyensis'</i> )	Flowering Currant ( <i>Ribes sanguineum</i> )
Hyssop ( <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> )	Thyme ( <i>Thymus vulgaris</i> )

### Cunning Containers

Pots and containers are one way of introducing wildlife features into more formal areas of your site e.g. entrance, reception areas. For smaller areas, containers are perfect. Herbs in particular make good container plants; they attract lots of wildlife, have great scent and may be less susceptible to drying out. There are also many ingenious planting schemes that can be tried. Sow your own mini-wildflower meadow in a window box, or line a pot with plastic to make a potted pond or bog garden.



Top Insect Plants for your Containers	
Pot marigold ( <i>Calendula officinalis</i> )	Tobacco plant ( <i>Nicotiana glauca</i> )
Thyme ( <i>Thymus vulgaris</i> )	Sweet alyssum ( <i>Lobularia maritima</i> )
Rosemary ( <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> )	Nasturtium ( <i>Tropaeolum majus</i> )
Marjoram ( <i>Origanum vulgare</i> )	Lobelia ( <i>Lobelia erinus</i> )
Candytuft ( <i>Iberis amara</i> )	Verbena ( <i>Verbena x hybrida</i> )

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### Making a bumblebee nest for the garden.

In early spring new queen bumblebees come out of hibernation and start their long search for a suitable nest site. They often build their nests in old mouse and vole nests on or below ground level. Heat insulation and avoiding dampness are of great importance and sometimes nests are covered over with moss.

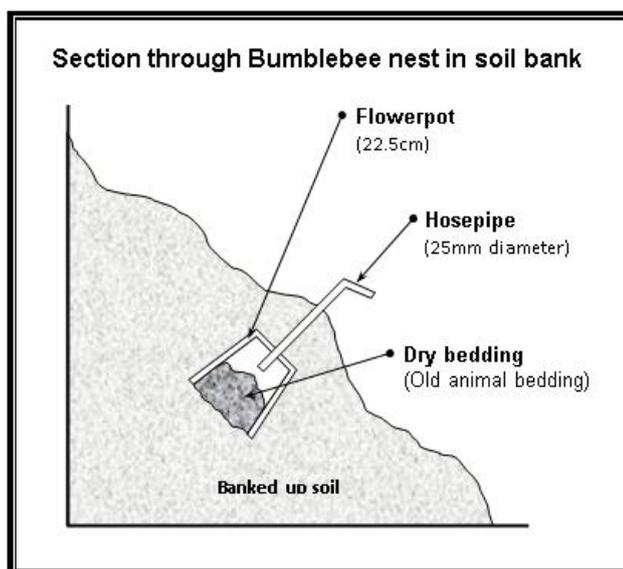
Bumblebees don't fly very far, rarely going further than a few hundred metres, so their nest needs to be near their feeding areas. Follow the directions below to create a nest in your grounds:

Half bury a 225mm deep clay flowerpot in a dry, well drained, sheltered, sunny flowerbed or hedge bottom so that the drainage hole in the base faces outwards.

Attach a short length of hosepipe (25-30mm wide) to the flowerpot's drainage hole.

Add some bedding material such as pet bedding, dry grass, straw, or upholsterer's cotton (not cotton wool.)

Cover over the rest of the pot with soil or vegetation so that the pipe sticks out. Plant a 10cm tall stick upright nearby – bees may use this as a 'marking post' to help them find their way back to the nest.



### Create an Insect Hotel

Insect hotels replicate natural features sought by wildlife in your grounds - particularly by invertebrates. They're not a substitute for well-structured vegetation and dead and decaying wood though, so ideally, try and provide them as well.



Choose a level, firm site in the sunlight or light shade - most invertebrates prefer moist areas of dappled shade. Find somewhere easily visible, perhaps close to a hedge, shrub bed or pond.

The main structure of the insect hotel is made out of wooden pallets packed with recycled or natural materials such as dead wood, hollow canes, straw, dry leaf litter, bricks and blocks with holes to name but a few.

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