

## “Our 3 villages caring for our environment”

**Biggin** - Coffee, Cake and Chat which is held on the last Thursday of the month between 2-4pm at the village hall has formed a wildflower group. After discussion with the parish council, it has been agreed to start with a couple of small areas in the village, in addition to part of St Thomas's churchyard, and see how it goes. You may have spotted the sign announcing 'excuse the weeds we're feeding the bees' near the bus stop.

The school children are also busy tending their insect friendly garden. It's one of the best ways of supporting our biodiversity and doesn't have to involve growing weeds. Bees love herbs like chives and rosemary and, according to the RHS, British wildflowers are some of the most reliable plants that we can grow. Jacob's ladder, with its clusters of purple flowers, is Derbyshire's county plant.

Talking of bees and insects, has everyone seen Biggin School's wonderful insect hotel created for the Little Explorers in their outside area? Insect hotels can be purchased ready-made or built to provide hidey-holes for wildlife in even the smallest gardens. And why not add an insect watering station to your garden at the same time? They're quick to make and pretty as well. Fill a saucer with shells, pebbles or even marbles to give the insects somewhere to stand and then just add water making sure that the pebbles are not completely covered.

The social group has also started a seed swapping scheme. Its only relatively recently that seeds have been purchased in packets from shops. In the past, seed was saved for use the following year and it remains an opportunity to increase the number of plants in the garden for free. If you're going to collect seed make sure to do it on a dry day. Lay the seedheads out to dry on a warm windowsill (watch out for the exploding variety that scatter seeds everywhere) and then place the dried seed in a labelled paper packet in an airtight container until its needed.

Alternatively, if you're out and about in Hartington Nether Quarter why not see how many kinds of wildflower you can spot? When the school children went for a walk in Biggin Dale they were delighted to see purple orchids. Julia.

**Earl Sterndale**-Wild Flowers in Earl Sterndale Church yard, there were celandine, snowdrops, primroses in the churchyard, in Spring. Village Flowers, Spring snowdrops. Summer, what I have seen so far, pink campion, old fashioned phlox, wild geranium, bluebells, cowslips, there will be many more in the fields.

We will ask if anyone, in our PCC can give some time for wildflower observation. DCC are leaving some of the village green unmown to encourage wildlife and flowers. Angela.

**Hartington Wildflower Group.** New community wildflower area established at the Village Hall. Thank you to everyone who helped to create our latest community wildflower area as part of the Coronation volunteering day on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May. Despite the wet conditions on the day, the area alongside of the Village Hall was cleared and a selection of native wildflowers and bushes planted which are already well established and will provide a new haven for wildlife in the village.

**Wildflowers in Churchyard showing the benefits of reduced mowing.** With the support of the mowing team from DDDC, areas of the closed churchyard are now being left unmown throughout the summer which has enabled a number of previously unseen wildflowers to appear recently, which is really encouraging. As part of the national 'Churches Count on Nature' week, we recently carried out a wildflower survey, which identified an impressive 39 different types. The orange fox and cubs, white oxeye daisies and yellow mouse-ear hawkweed are especially lovely to see at present so why not pay a visit and have a look around to see what you else can spot?

**Wildlife returns to the Youth Hostel pond.** After a year of hard work to restore the pond back to its former glory, it was very exciting to be able to welcome Smooth Newts back to the pond in May. Other wildlife is also returning and the area around the pond is now full of a range of wildflowers. In partnership with the team at the Youth Hostel, more volunteer sessions are planned for the summer to continue our work on the pond and we hope to be able to open up the area to all visitors later this year – seating is being restored around the pond offering a lovely view of the village, and the intention is to be able to offer pond dipping as well.

**Do you need some fresh herbs?** Did you know that we have a community planter full of lovely herbs in the centre of the village next to the bus stop available without cost to anyone who would like some - please feel free to help yourself to cuttings of Sage, Marjoram, Thyme or Chives.

**Looking after Toads and Frogs around the Village Mere-** With thanks to the Parish Council for their support, we will be installing Toad / Frog crossing signs next spring during the period of migration to and from the pond. You may have seen similar signs in Monyash. These signs will alert drivers passing by the Mere to be on the lookout for toad and frogs crossing. If you'd like to get involved in toad and frog patrols next spring, please do contact us.

**Getting in touch** If you'd like to find out more, please let me know in person or phone (07714 895175) or send an email to [wildflowers@hartingtonvillage.com](mailto:wildflowers@hartingtonvillage.com). We also have a Facebook page - **Hartington Wildflowers** that contains regular updates as well as contact information. Phillip Neal