

Pickering Environment Group

Wildflower Verge Trial

June 2023

Wildflower areas are an essential haven for many animals including hedgehogs, butterflies and bees. Birds such as swifts require insects for food, where wildflowers also play a part.

Much of our wildlife continues to be lost at an alarming rate and it is no co-incidence that 97% of our wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s, often giving way to crops where the use of pesticides is widespread.

Wildflower verges are one way of replacing these lost areas, however concerns around visibility and an appearance of scruffiness can prevent local councils from taking action.

It was therefore very welcome news that Pickering Town Council agreed to a trial verge where grass was cut and then collected by their normal contractor, with some wildflower seeds being planted.

This promised to be a useful case study as this area was next to an identical verge which was cut in the normal way with cuttings left in situ.

So, how much difference would this make?

After just 3 years, the difference between the 2 areas was staggering with 24 different species of wildflower identified in the 50M stretch. The neighbouring cut area contained just 4 varieties.

According to Plantlife, an area containing 9 or more plant varieties counts as species-rich grassland. It can therefore be safely concluded that this trial shows how successful a wildflower verge can be for promoting plant species and therefore protecting our wildlife.







Black Medic

An annual or short lived perennial, 'clover like' wildflower that's very similar in appearance to lesser trefoil. It's happiest growing on dry, nutrient deficient soils in grassland or disturbed soils. A member of the 'pea' family, black medic attracts many pollinating insects, including bees, butterflies and moths.



Blue Flax

The leaves and seed of flaxes are considered desirable forages for deer, antelope, and birds. Flax plants may also provide some cover for selected small bird species. They provide diversity to the plant community.



Broad Leaved Dock

A common plant that grows on waste ground, in hedgerows, gardens and roadside verges, and next to water all over the UK. An abundant perennial, flower spikes appear from June to October.

Broad-leaved dock is one of the foodplants of the caterpillars of the Small copper butterfly.



Bush Vetch

Bush vetch is a member of the pea and clover family (legumes). It can be found scrambling through many different habitats, including woodland edges, rough grassland, roadside verges and scrubland. Lilac flowers appear between April and November attracting bumblebees and Honeybees. Weevils, beetles and caterpillars also feed on Bush vetch.



Common Yarrow

Noted for attracting wildlife, Yarrow is one of the best producers of nectar in relation to the small space the plant occupies. Attracts birds, butterflies, bees, hoverflies and many other insects.



Cuckoo Flower

Cuckoo Flower or Lady's Smock as it is also known, like other early wildflowers provides a nectar source for Butterflies, Bees and other insects in early spring, making it a great addition to a wild flower or wildlife garden.



European Field Pansy

The delicate Field pansy is a wild relative of our garden pansy and can be found in fields and on waste ground and roadside verges. Its long-stalked, pale yellow flowers can be found winding their way through the grasses from April to October. They are annuals, so they live for one growing season, flowering, seeding and dying off. Only the dormant seeds survive, ready for the next season.



Fox and Cubs

Fox and Cubs is an important source of nectar for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Its bright orange-red flowers are particularly attractive to bees, which are essential for pollinating many of our food crops.



Love in a Mist

Nigella damascena's natural flowering period is from June to September, when the love-in-a-mist blossoms are bound to attract plenty of bees and other helpful pollinators.



Hogweed

Hogweed is abundant in hedgerows, roadside verges, waste grounds and rough grasslands. A member of the carrot family, it displays large, umbrella-like clusters of creamy-white flowers between May and August which are attractive to a range of insects.



Long Smooth Headed Poppy

The Long-headed Poppy is a beautiful and fascinating plant that is well adapted to a variety of habitats. It is easy to grow and is a great plant for attracting pollinators to your garden. If you are looking for a striking and easy-to-grow addition to your garden, the Long-headed Poppy is definitely worth considering.



Germander Speedwell

Germander speedwell is an excellent nectar source for solitary bees and can be grown in the garden. Its blue flowers look very pretty when carpeting a flowery meadow; keep the grass short in early spring to allow it to grow through, then raise the cutting level of your mower later on.



Smooth Meadow Grass

Smooth Meadow-grass is an important species for wildlife, providing habitat and food for a variety of species such as songbirds and small mammals. The grass can be found in a variety of habitats, from grasslands and meadows to wetlands and forest edges.



Wood Avens

A common plant of hedgerows and woodlands, wood avens is also known as 'herb bennet'. Small, quickly drooping, yellow flowers appear on slender stems from May to August and are a good source of nectar. Wood avens is also a foodplant of the caterpillars of the grizzled skipper butterfly.



White Clover

White clover is a common plant of grassy areas, from lawns to pastures, roadsides to meadows, as both a wild and sown flower. The famous trefoil leaves are collected by Wood Mice and are one of the foodplants of the common blue butterfly; the flowers appear from May to October and are sought after by all kinds of bumblebees.



Spiny Sow Thistle



























Sow thistle is a springtime flower that pops up in lawns, fields and roadsides with abandon. This tall, prickly, yellow-flowered plant with fluffy seedheads is related to dandelions and sunflowers.

Although it is a hardy perennial wildflower, most people consider sow thistle a perennial problem. It is usually mowed down well before it has a chance to flower and produce an abundance of white windborne seeds.



Full List of Species

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|  Black Medic |  Germander Speedwell |
|  Blue Flax |  Hogweed |
|  Broad-Leaved Dock |  Long Smooth-headed Poppy |
|  Bull Thistle |  Love-in-a-Mist |
|  Bush Vetch |  Meadow Buttercup |
|  Common Dandelion |  Ragwort |
|  Creeping Buttercup |  Ribwort Plantain |
|  Common Daisy |  Smooth Meadow Grass |
|  Common Yarrow |  Spiny Sow Thistle |
|  Cuckooflower |  White Clover |
|  European Field Pansy |  Wood Avens |
|  Fox and Cubs |  Woodruff |

Pickering Environment Group is a group of volunteers working on a wide range of initiatives to conserve wildlife, reduce waste and tackle climate change.

If you would like to get involved or would like more information please contact pickeringenvgroup@gmail.com or join their Facebook Group.