

Creating the ultimate... *pollinator patch*



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The word 'pollinator' seems to be mentioned in every Government document that is written on the countryside at the moment. A pollinator is anything that encourages the process by which pollen is transferred from one flower to another, allowing flowers to become fertilised and thus produce seeds and fruits. A number of plants, such as grasses, are pollinated by the wind. Bees, although important, actually perform only part of this process as a myriad other species such as flies, midges, beetles, wasps, thrips, bugs, butterflies, moths and even mammals all play their part too.

So planting the 'perfect' pollinator patch is often more difficult than you first thought. To simplify it, I am going to concentrate on a mix for bumblebees, as they are the species that the Government is currently encouraging farmers to plant mixes for.



Clean the ground of weeds such as docks, ragwort and thistles. Although the last two species are great sources of pollen and nectar, they are part of the 'Weed Act', obliging farmers to keep them under control.



Strips can be planted in a sunny place, and as long as it is not in total shade, a sheltered place can be just as important. This strip is planted alongside a beetle bank.

A mix for bumblebees could include red and alsike clover, bird's foot trefoil, sainfoin, knapweed, cowslip, bugle, self heal, tufted vetch, musk mallow, meadow cranesbill and many more.



Checklist

- 1 Choose your place to plant.
 - 2 Clean the ground of weeds such as docks, ragwort and thistles.
 - 3 Choose plants that flower for as long as possible throughout the year, ideally from spring right through to autumn.
 - 4 Sow from April to September (the best time is July and August). Do not add any grass to the mix. If the area becomes very weedy in year one, you should consider mowing.
 - 5 Once fully established, you can cut half the area in June, as this will encourage it to re-grow and flower again in the late summer and autumn, when not many other flowers are available.
- For more advice on the perfect pollinator patch please contact us on 01425 651013.

Cut half of the area in June, as it will then encourage it to re-grow and flower again.



8 months
of the year pollen and nectar needs to be on offer for bees to flourish