



JERSEY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION



What makes a good pollinator garden?

There is definitely a buzz in the air as this year the Jersey Bee Keepers Association (JBKA) is holding its centenary celebrations!

To celebrate, the JBKA has teamed up with the RJA&HS and Ransoms Garden Centre to offer a new prize for their Annual Garden Competition.

The JBKA Centenary Shield will be awarded for the best 'Pollinator Garden' from all the gardens and allotments entered- whatever the size!

So how can we get our gardens to provide that welcome larder?

The first bit of handy advice is that 'Pollinators' come in all shapes and sizes; ranging from bees (honey bees, bumble bees, solitary bees), wasps and hoverflies to moths, butterflies etc. This is a diverse group with each one specialised in what they do and what flowers they visit! They are all after that sweet nectar and pollen!

The first rule of thumb is that single flowers are best (those doubles may look good to us, but all those petals makes it very difficult for pollinators to reach the nectar!). Native plants are another plus - pollinators have evolved with these, rather than the strange exotics.

It is also best to plant a succession of flowers across the year to supply a good supply of pollen and nectar. Like helicopters, hoverflies need landing pads: flowers with flatter blooms are easier to land on. Plants also produce more nectar in the sun- so choose sunny spots away from cold winds.

Weeds are also good! Goes against the grain I know - but weeds such as dandelion, daisy, creeping thistle and buttercup are especially sought after - however they also have better behaved family members that include chrysanthemums, sunflowers, globe thistles and clematis.

Also important, is to think about the pollinator's life cycle - it's all about diversity - build a pond or leave a water butt uncovered. Standing water is useful for the larvae of many species and for drinking. Bug hotels, holes, piles of twigs/old wood, compost etc. are especially sought after for winter refuge or during rain (handy if you need an excuse to be an untidy gardener!).

Pesticides and herbicides, of course, are bad and should be avoided or minimised. Don't spray aphids if there are hoverflies around: some lay eggs that hatch into aphid munchers.

Leave your lawn a little wilder. Hoverflies are partial to daisies. The rise in domestic lawn-care treatments that 'feed and weed' has depleted daisy numbers.

You can grow other plants as well as flowers - all fruits and some vegetables, like beans peas, tomatoes and courgettes need to be pollinated.

Pollinators love herbs as much as we do - anything from creeping thyme to large shrubs like lavender and rosemary will be magnets for a wealth of pollinators including foreign visitors like hummingbird hawkmoths and red admiral butterflies.

Talking of butterflies, remember that the caterpillars of lots of butterflies eat stinging nettles, so don't think that the difficult untidy corner will lose you points!

A little attention will go a long way and you will soon reap the rewards in a diverse ecosystem.

Good luck!