



GUIDE TO POLLINATOR PLANTING IN AMENITY SPACES

This pollinator planting guide will help you improve your provision for pollinators in urban and amenity areas while still providing an aesthetic display. The plants in this guide have been chosen as they are low maintenance, non-invasive, easily available, cost effective, and relatively drought tolerant.

Created in partnership with the Head Gardener at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens.





Introduction:

Pollinators play a vital role by pollinating food crops and supporting wildlife by helping plants reproduce. Nearly 80% of all flowering plants are pollinated by insects and a third of the mouthfuls of food we eat rely on pollination. Pollinators provide an essential service in the UK, pollinating £690 million worth of crops annually. Unfortunately, our pollinators are under threat and so populations are in decline. Pollinating insects need sustenance and shelter to survive - not just in the countryside but across our environment, even in our parks and cities. Every action we take to support pollinators will make a difference.

It's not just about wildlife! Attracting pollinators to our amenity spaces is an excellent way of improving people's health and wellbeing. It can connect people more closely with the seasons, providing a great sense of enjoyment. Taking time to observe wildlife outdoors helps distract us from daily hassles and lets our brains rest from cognitively tiring activities. Observing bees and butterflies is an incredibly effective way to recharge our mental and emotional batteries.

A note on native/non-native plant species:

Pollinators rely on nectar and pollen for energy to survive. The problem with many non-native and cultivated garden plants is that the shape of the flower may not be easily accessible to insects - they are often popular due to their appearance rather than suitability to native wildlife. They are often also nectar-deficient compared to their native plant cousins. Having said that, studies have found that some garden plants and cultivars are still suitable for our native pollinators. In rural and countryside areas we only promote native species. However amenity and urban settings have a unique set of needs and restrictions that means that going completely non-native is not always feasible. For example, aesthetics are often top of the list of requirements. Spaces may be exposed to the elements (sunny concrete spaces can get hot and are more akin to a mediterranean climate), and using small containers will mean that plants need to be more drought tolerant and hardy in order to survive. In open spaces plants can easily be outcompeted by more dominant grass, so more resilient plant species will be required. Garden plants and cultivars, if chosen well, can be a fantastic resource for pollinators and therefore we are championing these specific plants in contained, managed spaces. We do not recommend the use of the non-native species below where there is the risk of them spreading into natural areas. All species below are non-native unless "native" is stated under 'extra notes'.





Getting started with planting

You will need to:

1. Decide if your space is a sunny or shady location and refer to the relevant planting list.
2. Ensure you have suitable soil for your planting.
3. Measure the space you have available for planting to create a planting layout and calculate your planting density.
4. Create an aftercare schedule based on the maintenance notes for the plants chosen.

Step 1 - Sunny or shady location

Decide if your space is in a sunny or shady location and then refer to the relevant planting list in this guide.

Hopefully you can make this decision based on instinct without any further guidance. It's best not to overthink it, however we're providing some additional notes just in case. It is certainly wrong to presume that all north facing areas will be shady and cold. Equally, it is wrong to presume that all south facing areas will be hot and sunny all day long, all year round. In the city, tall buildings and even boundary fences can create shade. In suburban areas, tall trees in neighbouring areas may be shading what would otherwise be a sunny patch.

Sunny location: Full sun means six full hours of direct sunlight. Partial sun means 3 – 6 hours of direct sunlight each day. This is a common garden scenario where many plants thrive.

Shady location: Any less than 3 hours of direct sunlight per day would be considered shady. Areas may be under dappled shade, where direct sunlight is broken up, filtered or diffused. This type of shading is common under trees with lightweight canopies, such as silver birches. Deep or heavy shade is usually under dense tree cover, e.g. beech or conifer hedges or overhanging buildings. In practical terms if a site receives less than two hours of direct sun per day, it must be considered to be heavy shade.



Step 2 – Suitable soil

Drainage for Containers and Beds

Why Drainage is Important: without proper drainage, plants will sit in water and die.

- Large Containers: Add a layer of chunky aggregate (like broken bricks or builders' rubble) at the bottom.
- Small Containers: Use old tiles or broken clay pots.
- Next Layer: Add a porous membrane or weed suppressant mat to let water drain through.
- Top Layer: Add your substrate/soil mix. Don't just fill the container with compost.

Substrate/soil mix

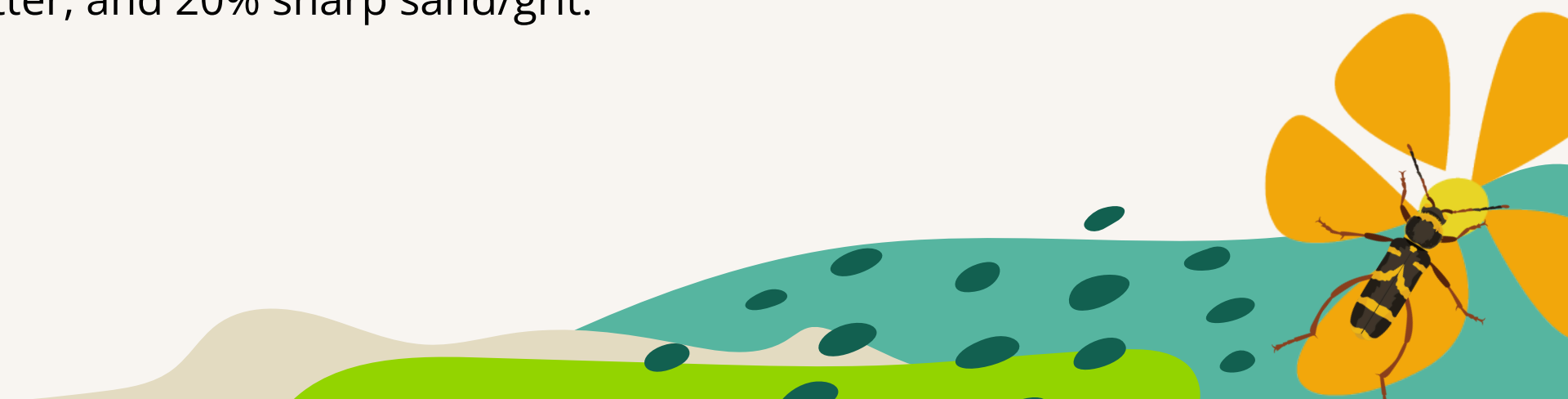
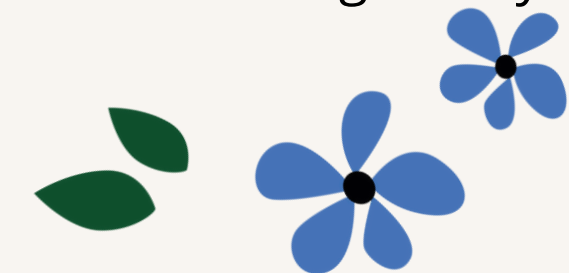
For New Beds:

- Sunny Areas: These will require well-drained and dry soil. Mix 60% loam/topsoil with 40% sharp sand/grit.
- Shady Areas: These will require humus-rich soil. Mix 50% loam/topsoil, 30% organic matter, and 20% sharp sand/grit.

For Existing Beds:

- Check Drainage: Ensure the bed already has good drainage.
- To improve soil, add organic matter:
 - Sunny Areas: Add a mix of 60% organic matter and 40% sharp sand/grit.
 - Shady Areas: Add a mix of 50% loam/topsoil, 30% organic matter, and 20% sharp sand/grit.

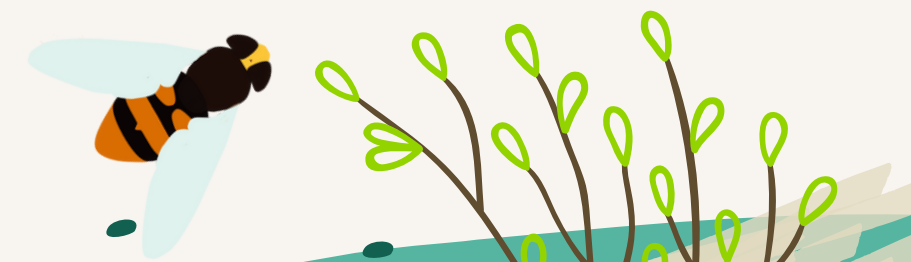
*For glossary of terms see next page





Glossary of terms

- Compost – This is a type of organic matter. It is made from decomposed plant and kitchen waste, usually in a compost bin or heap. Do not confuse it with ‘seed compost’ or ‘potting compost’.
- Humus – This is dark earth that has a higher proportion of organic material.
- Loam – This is a type of topsoil and is used to give the planting substrate its ‘body’. It is a high-quality earth that is a mixture of sand, clay, and organic material. You can use it where you have no natural soil. You will generally need to add other elements to it to create the best soil conditions for your plants. It can be purchased sterilised in ton bags.
- Organic matter – Organic means derived from living matter. The term organic matter includes well-rotted manure, garden compost or leaf mulch or woodchip. These may also be referred to as 'soil improver' or 'soil conditioner'. Organic matter contains no soil so cannot be used as a planting substrate by itself, as it will have no structure and will continue to rot down to nothing over time.
- Sand/grit – This is used to improve soil structure by enhancing drainage, preventing soil compaction and providing a stable environment for plant roots. Horticultural or sharp sand must be used.
- Seed or potting compost – This is commercially produced and made from a mix of various ingredients, such as loam, composted bark, coir and sand. Used for growing seedlings or plants in containers but is very expensive and not an effective way of improving soil.
- Topsoil – This is the uppermost layer of soil, which is high in nutrients and organic matter. You can use it where you have no natural soil. You will generally need to add other elements to it to create the best soil conditions for your plants. It is widely available to buy in bags or in bulk from specialist suppliers, garden centres and DIY superstores.





Step 3 – Measure the space and calculate how many plants to purchase

- Work out the area of your planting bed e.g. 3m by 3m equals 9 square metres.
- Choose which flowers/plants you like the look of using either the shady beds or sunny beds plant list. Check the notes for other considerations e.g. you may like to choose a mixture of shrubs and herbaceous perennials. It is a good idea to provide nectar sources across the seasons, so if you can choose plants that flower at different times.
- If you have sufficient space, you might like to choose a tree from the list of pollinator friendly, small trees we have given.
- Look at planting densities to work out how many plants you need to fill the space. You don't need to plant all of the suggested species, just pick those you fancy. One of each plant may look a little odd. For small spaces you might only pick 3 or 4 different plants types.
- Make sure you choose the correct species of each plant, do not deviate from the list given with substitutions. Closely related species may be invasive or nectar deficient.
- Tree selection: trees can be purchased in different sizes and come as either pot grown or root ball. We recommend asking for advice at a local tree nursery as they can advise what's best for your particular needs and planting situation.
- Plant in small blocks and drifts. Plant in odd numbers - that may drive the OCD amongst us mad but it will look more natural. More naturalistic planting may have a cluster of plants together then a smaller number mixed amongst the rest of the planting.
- You can lay plants out on the beds before you plant to see how they look.



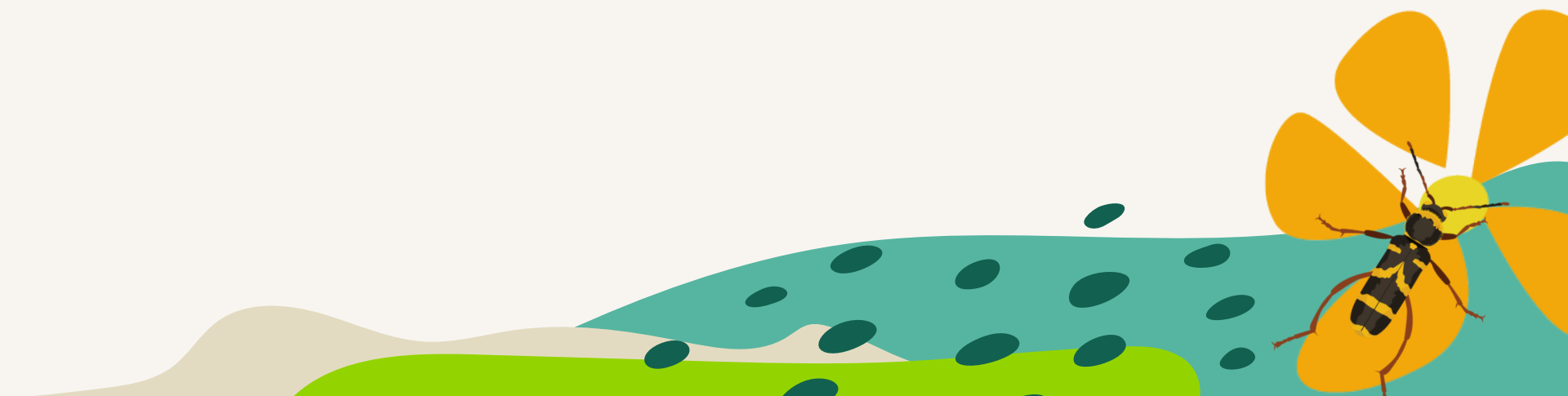
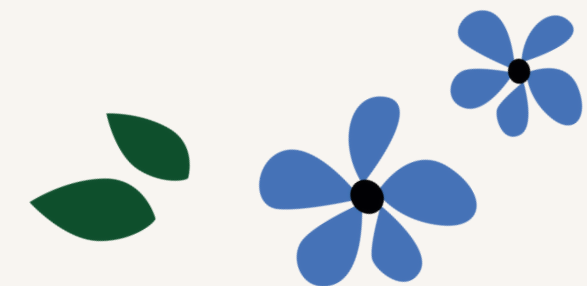
Step 4 – Create an aftercare schedule

Given the low maintenance of our planting list this is going to be very simple, but is worth planning in advance. Make sure you have a plan of who is going to maintain the plants on an ongoing basis especially with regards to watering. Use the notes from the lists to create your schedule and ensure the person delegated for care of the plants is aware of this.

Watering is especially important during hot weather. However, living in the south of England the likelihood of experiencing hose-pipe bans is on the rise.

Some top tips for conserving water:

- Water your garden early in the morning or in the evening - evaporation is at its lowest and plants will benefit.
- Consider if it is possible to install a water butt at your location.
- Fit a trigger nozzle to your hosepipe to halve water use and direct the water to where you need it.
- Use a watering can not a hose as it uses less water, and don't waste water on paths or patios.
- A solution during hose-pipe bans is to use 'grey water' [Expert RHS advice on using grey water in gardens](#)
- Providing at least some water to plants using a watering can or grey water is crucial for plant survival during hot weather when there are hose-pipe bans. You could consider recruiting a local volunteer to water garden beds with grey water, for example from a nearby kitchen, during these times.



Sunny beds - pollinator plant list

Agastache - Giant Hyssop



Caryopteris clandonensis - Bluebeard



Chaerophyllum roseum - Hairy Chervil



Eryngium zabellii - Sea Holly



Hylotelephium spectabile - Ice Plant



Hyssopus officinalis - Hyssop



Lavendula - Dwarf Lavender



Lychnis coronaria - Rose Campion



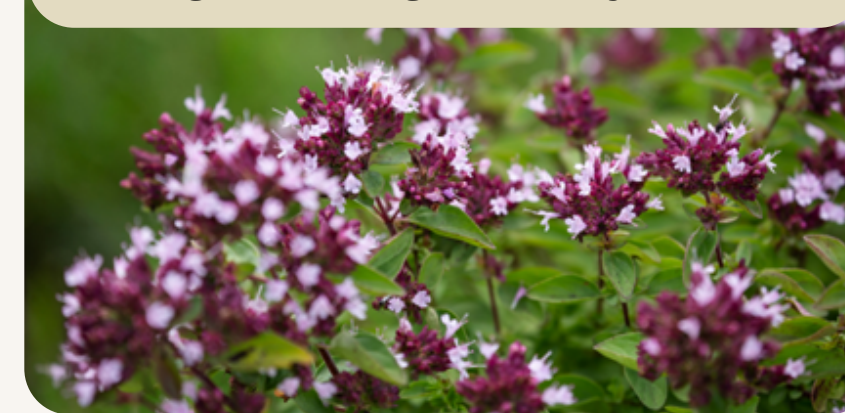
Malva moschata - Musk Mallow



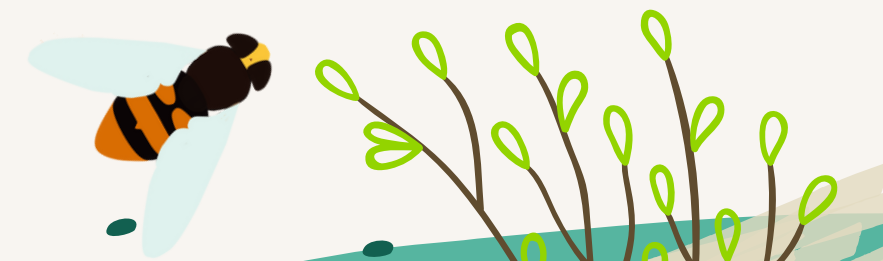
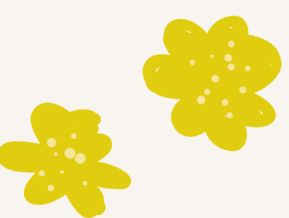
Nepeta - Catmint



Origanum vulgare - Marjoram



Salvia officinalis - Sage



Sunny Beds – Pollinator plant list

Genera	Species	Type	Height	Colour	Flowering time	Planting densities	Maintenance	Extra notes
Agastache	foeniculum	Herbaceous perennial	70cm	Blue/purple	Summer and autumn	2-3 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Caryopteris	clandonensis (any cultivar)	Shrub - deciduous	60cm	Blue flowers, silver foliage	Summer and autumn	1 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Chaerophyllum	roseum	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	Delicate pink	Spring and summer	3-4 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	Fluffy plant
Eryngium	zabellii	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	Blue/silver	Summer	3-5 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	This species does not run/ get out of hand.
Hylotelephium (previously Sedum)	spectabile	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	Pink or red ('Red Cauli')	Summer	6 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	Needs full sun to stop from going 'leggy'
Hyssopus	officinalis	Shrub - evergreen	50cm	Blue or white	Summer and autumn	3 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Lavandula	any dwarf cultivar	Shrub - evergreen	60 cm	Blue /purple	Summer	5 per m ²	One cut per year in August / September	Not very long lived.
Lychnis	coronaria	Herbaceous perennial	60cm	bright magenta / silver	Summer	2-4 per m ²	One cut per year in March/ April	Can move around as seedlings will easily establish when old plants die out.
Malva	moschata ('Alba' or in pink)	Herbaceous perennial	90cm	Pink or white	Summer and autumn	1 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	Native
Nepeta	any small cultivar	Herbaceous perennial	30cm	Blue	Summer	2-3 per m ²	One cut per year in March/ April	
Origanum	vulgare	Herbaceous perennial	40cm	Dusky pink	Summer and autumn	2-4 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April. Might need editing to stop from spreading too far every other year	Native
Salvia	officinalis	Shrub - evergreen	30 - 60cm	Blue/ purple	Summer	5-7 per m ²	Dead heading will improve appearance after flowering	

Shady beds - pollinator plant list

Astrantia maxima - Masterwort



Aquilegia vulgaris - Granny's Bonnet



Brunnera macrophylla - Siberian Bugloss



Geranium psilostemon - Armenian Cranesbill



Geranium sylvaticum - Cranesbill "Mayflower"



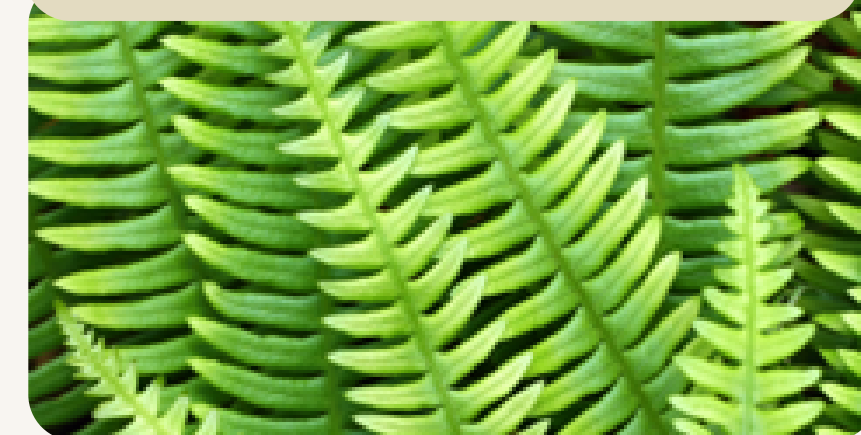
Melittis melissophyllum - Bastard Balm



Myrrhus odorata - Sweet Cicely



Polypodium vulgare - Common Polypody



Polystichum aculeatum - Hard Shield Fern



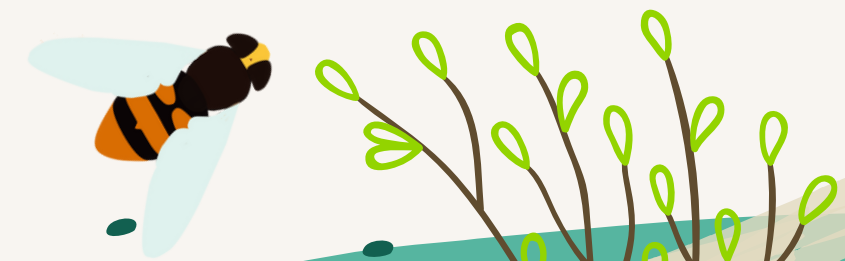
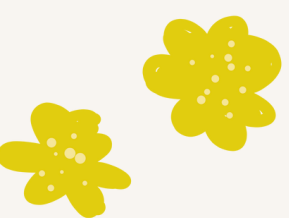
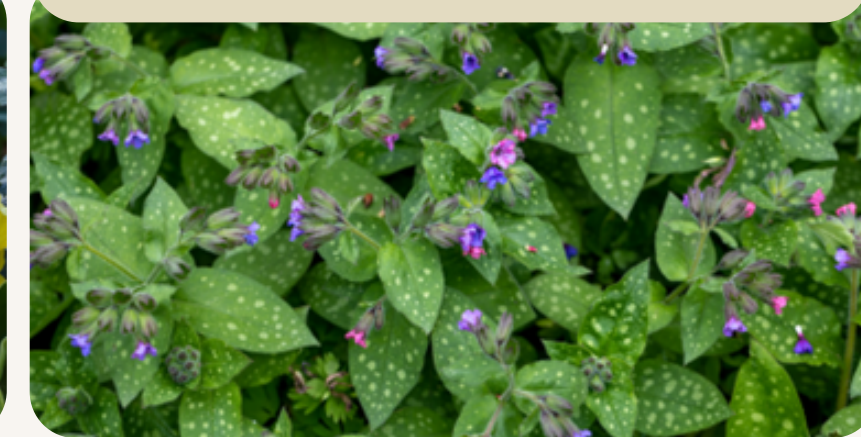
Polystichum setiferum - Soft Shield Fern



Primula vulgaris - Primrose



Pulmonaria angustifolia - Lungwort



Shady Beds – Pollinator plant list

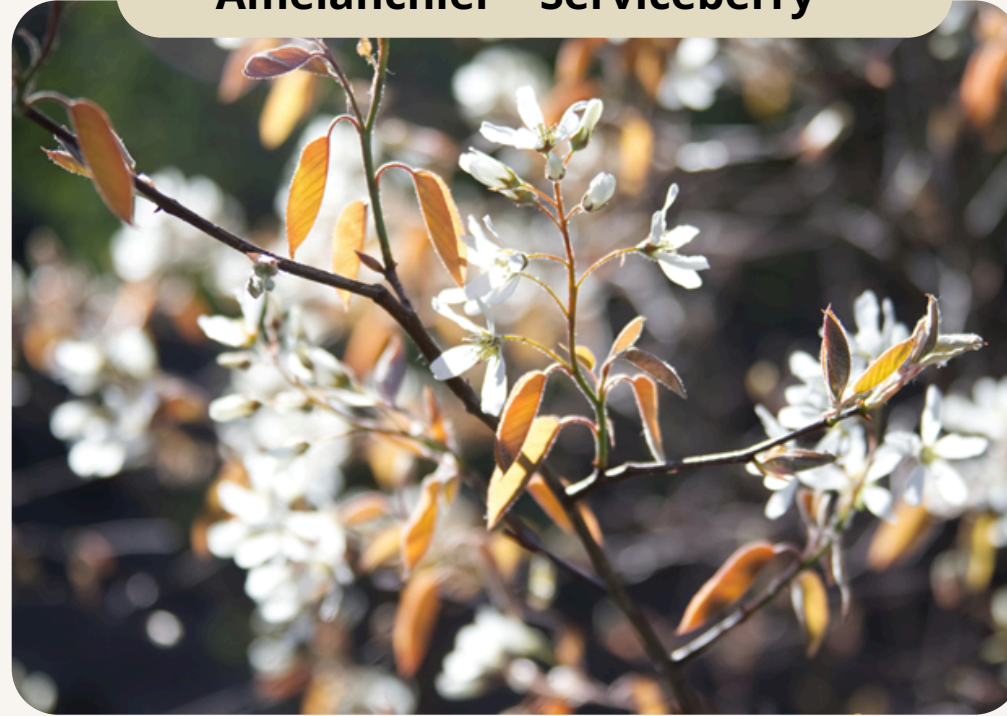
Genera	Species	Type	Height	Colour	Flowering time	Planting densities	Maintenance	Extra
Aquilegia	vulgaris (stick to straight species)	Herbaceous perennial	40cm	Blue	Spring and summer	6-9 per m ²	Cut dead flower stalks	
Astrantia	maxima or cultivar	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	White/ pink	Summer	6 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Brunnera	macrophylla	Herbaceous perennial	30cm	Blue	Early spring	9 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Geranium	sylvaticum 'Mayflower'	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	Pale lilac	Spring and summer	7-9 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Geranium	psilostemon	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	Magenta pink	Summer	5-6 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	
Melittis	melissophyllum	Herbaceous perennial	30cm	Reddish white	Spring and summer	5-6 per m ²	None required	
Myrrhis	odorata	Herbaceous perennial	50cm	White	Summer	5 per m ²	One cut per year in March / April	Summer flowers are followed by aniseed-scented fruits.
Polypodium	vulgare	Fern - evergreen	30cm	N/A	N/A	5 per m ²	None required	Native. Ferns will not provide pollen or nectar source but will support biodiversity and provide structure and winter interest. Prefers partial shade.
Polystichum	aculeatum	Fern - evergreen	60cm	N/A	N/A	5 per m ²	None required	As above but prefer full shade.
Polystichum	setiferum	Fern - evergreen	60cm	N/A	N/A	6-9 per m ²	None required	As above but do well in full or partial shade.
Primula	vulgaris	Herbaceous perennial	20cm	Yellow	Late winter and early spring	3-5 per m ²	None required	Native
Pulmonaria	angustifolia	Herbaceous perennial	30cm	Blue	Late winter and early spring	7-9 per m ²	Cut back after flowering for summer foliage	

Small trees - pollinator plant list

Acer campestre - Field maple



Amelanchier - Serviceberry



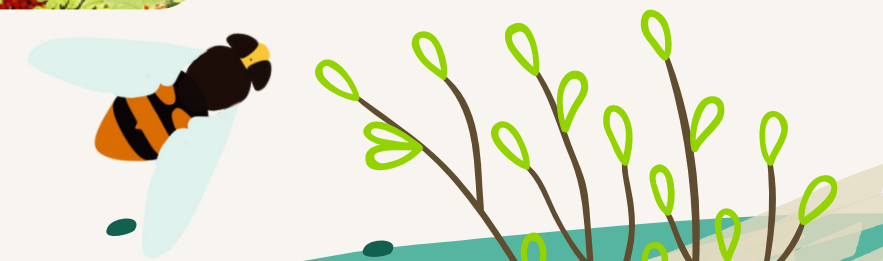
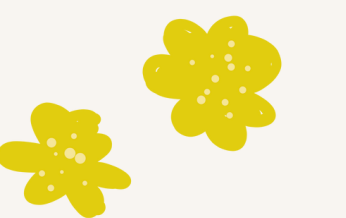
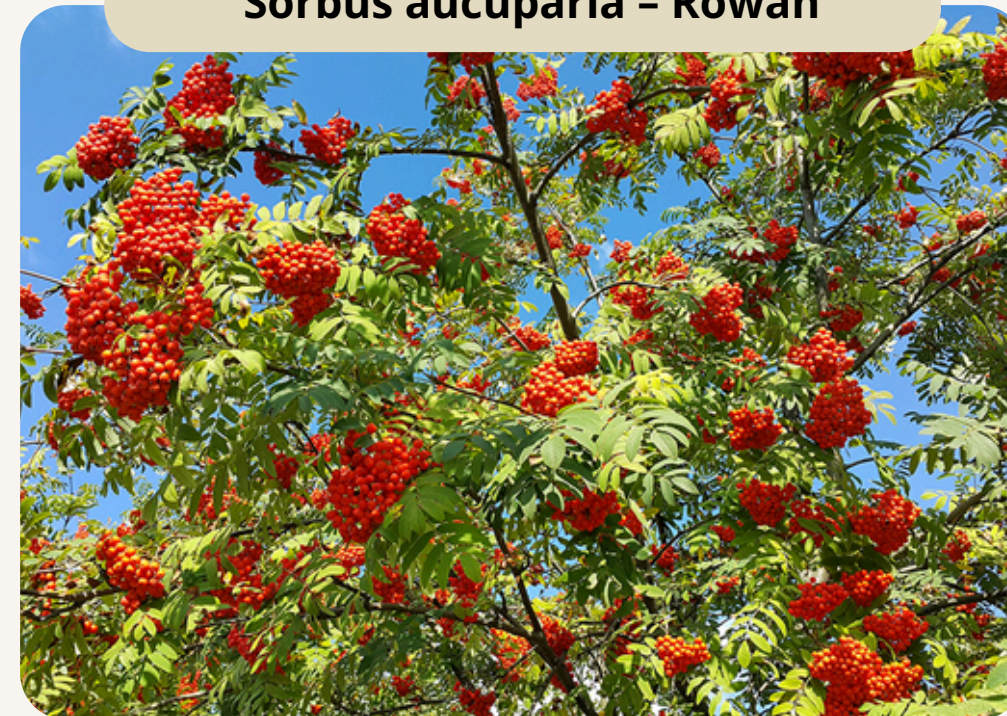
Corylus avellana - Hazel



Malus sylvestris - Crab apple



Sorbus aucuparia - Rowan



Small trees – Pollinator plant list

Genera	Species	Type	Height	Flowering time	Maintenance	Extra
Corylus	avellana	Tree/shrub: large, deciduous shrub or small multi-stemmed tree, about 6m tall.	4-8 metres	Late winter and early spring.	Once established to be coppiced every 7-10 years	The male flowers are yellow catkins. Hazel leaves provide food for the caterpillars of moths. In turn the caterpillars are a source of food for dormice and birds. Dormice, birds and small mammals eat the hazelnuts.
Amelanchier	multiple species	Tree/shrub.	Most species 4-8 metres	Early spring.	None	White flowers are followed by purple-black berries in summer. Berries are popular with hungry birds. Foliage is bronze tinged, turning a striking red in the autumn. Best autumn colour achieved when planted in full sun.
Malus	sylvestris	Tree: a small, rounded tree.	8-12 metres	Late spring.	None	Pink-tinged white flowers are followed by yellow-green or red-flushed fruits in autumn. The fruit is eaten by birds and mammals, such as mice, voles, foxes and badgers.
Sorbus	aucuparia	Tree: a broadly conical to rounded deciduous tree.	Higher than 12 metres	Spring and summer	None	Clusters of white flowers in late spring, followed by orange-red berries in early autumn. The leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of a number of moths. The berries are also a rich source of autumn food for birds.
Acer	campestre	Tree: a medium-sized deciduous tree with a compact bushy crown.	10-12 metres	Spring and summer	None	Attractive to aphids and their predators, including many species of ladybird, hoverfly and bird. Lots of species of moth feed on its leaves. Birds and small mammals eat the typical winged maple fruits.

All suitable for planting in full sun – partial shade.

All have approximate 4-8m spread.

We'd love to hear how you get on with this guide. If you have used it with positive results or have any other feedback please contact us at naturerecovery@hants.gov.uk. Don't forget to visit our webpage at www.hants.gov.uk/pollinatorpledge for more more ways to support pollinators.

