

PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS

DESIGNING YOUR GARDEN



Planting for pollinators doesn't mean sacrificing on the beauty of your planting scheme. There is a wide range of flowering plants from the UK, Europe and beyond providing an almost endless variety of flower shapes, colours and blooming times. Choosing a range of flowering plants from different parts of the world will help to provide food for bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies throughout the year.

Country of origin and blooming time



Some of the common plants we see in gardens across the UK actually originate from elsewhere around the globe. For example, 'English' lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is not actually from the British Isles at all, but originates from Southern Europe and the Middle East, and the common hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*), which we consider to be a quintessential part of the English country garden, was imported from China around the 15th century.

In planting for pollinators, it's great to include a few British native species, as they act as a staple source of nectar and pollen for insects. You can also add in a mix of flowering plants from our European neighbours, and some from even further afield in the Northern Hemisphere. These tend to be reliable to grow in the British climate, and provide a wide range of colours, textures and flowering times. Species that originate from the Southern hemisphere (sometimes referred to as 'Exotics') can also be added in smaller quantities to extend the flowering season.

It's important to try to spread the flowering time of plants in your garden - not only so that you have a lovely display of blooms across the year, but will support pollinators that are active early in the Season and late into Autumn. A few pollinators, such as the buff-tailed bumblebee, maintain colonies over Winter, so including off-season flowers will help them to survive the cold season.

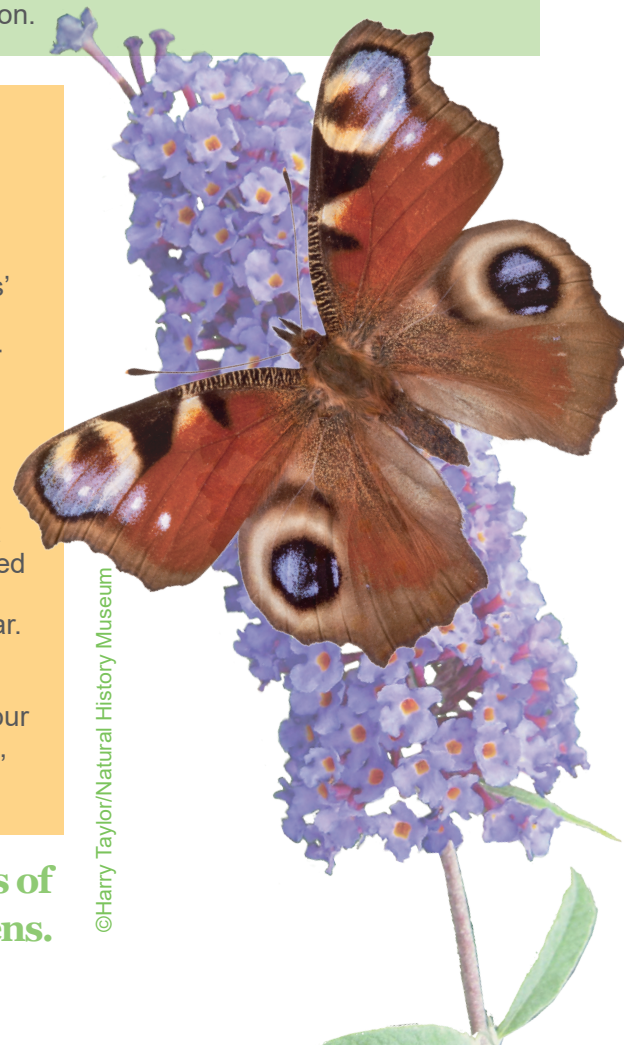
Flower shape and colour

Different flower shapes are adapted to different kinds of pollinating insects. Some flower shapes attract a wide range of pollinating insects, and others a few specific species. Flowers with wide open cups, such as buttercups or poppies for example, are 'open access' to almost all insects, whereas some species of granny's bonnet (*Aquilegia vulgaris*) seem to have co-evolved specifically with long-tongued bumblebees in mind.

If you would like to know more about flower architecture for pollinators, we've created a whole downloadable resource on this topic. For the purposes of planting design, it's enough to simply include a range of flower shapes and sizes to cater for the different pollinators who might visit your garden. Try to avoid double-flowered hybrids - novel plants that have been created by gardeners, as the extra petals often make it difficult for pollinators to access the nectar.

Some pollinators seem to show a preference for different flower colours, but there is no hard and fast rule. Including a range of colour not only provides a warm welcome to all sorts of pollinating insects, but will look wonderful too.

See our other downloadable PDFs for suggestions of great pollinator plants for sunny and shady gardens.



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