



In August HDBAG attended the [Allotment Show](#) in Harrogate's [Valley Gardens](#) as we have for many years. Whatever the weather this is always a fun event with a variety of stalls and of course the magnificent display of prize winning produce.

Allotments have an important part to play in wildlife corridors that are necessary for easy movement of species and consequently their survival.

Harlow Hill Allotment takes their supporting wildlife role seriously. Below is an interesting article from an allotment holder.

Harlow Hill Allotment

An allotment site is of course an ideal place to encourage wildlife. Whilst we're all trying to grow some good crops, there's plenty of opportunity to help nature too.

Harlow Hill Allotment site has, for many years, had a small wildlife area - with a pond and an uncultivated area around it. Additionally, several plots have small ponds (some just bin-lid size) and one or two bug hotels. The site is mainly surrounded by hedges and of course most of us have compost heaps and leaf piles.

A new area has just been established. There is one plot on the site which is unsuitable for its main purpose, due to the presence on the boundary of a large ancient oak tree. This means most of the plot is in the shade all day and of course the roots spread wide and far - not the best conditions for raising crops. So, the committee took the decision not to let the plot



but see what could be done with it. The front of this plot has been improved by the addition of raised beds for some cultivation, but the back half has become a wild life habitat. There is a large flower bed, with plants to attract bees and insects. A large bug hotel has been built, a new pond installed (the first frog spotted already) and the boundary area is left fairly wild – long grass grows in the summer, some natural plants, a log pile and a stone pile are also there. The hedge helps too. Hopefully all of this will help to encourage wildlife on this corridor.

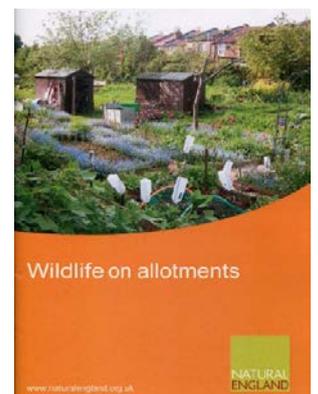


In addition, we also now have three beekeepers on site and two new hives – the first season of bees but everyone has remarked on how well things have been pollinated !

Chris Dicken

Natural England – Wildlife on Allotments

[Natural England](#) produced a useful brochure 'Wildlife on Allotments' in 2007. This is still available on the internet but [if you would prefer a print copy](#) to carry around we have them for £1 each for allotment holders, otherwise £2.50.





Wildlife Friendly Workplace Award

In August HDBAG was pleased to present Tidy Gardens with a [Wildlife Friendly Workplace Award](#).

[Tidy Gardens](#) is a NYCC Health and Adult Services facility operating near Stonefall Cemetery. They grow fruit and vegetables for themselves and sell the surplus. Team members work together in an organic, pesticide free garden and have a great recycling ethic.

Tidy Gardens

Tidy Gardens is run by NYCC Health and Adult Services day services for adults with learning disabilities.

Tidy Gardens is a Harrogate based facility near Stonefall Cemetery in a pleasant sheltered situation. We have a polytunnel where we raise plants from seed and grow tomatoes. We grow fruit and vegetables for ourselves and the surplus to sell to local people.



We work together at the pace of the team members in our organic and pesticide free garden. We recycle our milk containers to make all our plant labels. Until recently, we have collected all the wreaths from the cemetery and composted the plant material and collected the plastic for recycling.

- We have a pond that gives a home to Frogs and Toads.
- We have installed bird nest boxes.
- We have made homes for ladybirds.
- We have made a bug hotel.
- We grow nectar rich plants to attract insects.



Wildlife Friendly Garden Award

In October we were pleased to present [Sawley Village Wildlife Garden](#) with our Wildlife Friendly Garden Award. The Wildlife Garden, adjacent to the car park at the village hall, was created in 1997 by the villagers.

It is a tranquil haven providing an important habitat for birds, wildlife and plants with a pond, laid hedgerow and woven willow arbour.



Comments and contributions welcome

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Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

Respect for the lives of others

I have been giving some thought lately to the private lives of the denizens of our garden.

Courtesy of my involvement with [Zero Carbon Harrogate](#), I recently attended a [Women's Institute](#) regional day in Ripon, focusing on climate change. We were treated to some excellent and inspirational speakers, including (with my HDBAG hat on) the artist [Laney Birkhead](#), speaking about her growing involvement in beekeeping, the multiplicity of threats our bees face and her art project '[Swarm](#)', designed to raise awareness of the joy and significance of bees through the creative process of printmaking. Laney had a range of new (to me, a non-scientist) information about bees to make me inwardly gasp. Studies of honey bees reveal the complexity of the '[waggle dance](#)' - some of which I knew, but I hadn't really thought that all that takes place in the darkness of the hive. I have taken pleasure in identifying the [bumblebees](#) and [honey bees](#) that visit the flowers in my garden, but I had not appreciated the sophisticated processes involved in this. It is now thought that [flowers can switch ultra-violet light](#) on and off to indicate when they have nectar. It is also thought that flowers and bees have positive and negative electrical charges respectively, meaning the bee is attracted to the flower and receives a slight positive charge in addition to pollen and nectar. We know that honey bees need to visit 1,000 flowers to fill their stomach once, and that they make 10 trips a day to and from the hive, flying a radius of 3 to 4 miles, each bee making a twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in its lifetime. They are indeed busy, but what these more recent findings start to indicate is all the complex communications taking place in



our non-human world (for I don't suppose the flowers use ultra violet light and positive charges simply for honey bees), which we humans, with our restricted senses, fail to understand. Should I really be musing on the peace of my garden when it seems to be full of all this activity to which I am oblivious - and how much more have we yet to discover?

My thoughts move from the insects in our garden to the trees. How much more complex must their lives and organisation be? Once again scientists seem to be making new discoveries to this effect all the time, as just watching [George McGavin's recent BBC programme on an oak tree](#) would confirm.

Reading my newspaper recently, I came upon this telling piece from a [review by Adam Thorpe](#) of Colin Tudge's '[The Secret Life of Trees](#)':

'An average temperate wood - let alone an equatorial forest - is a miracle of complexity that sustains itself as much through "dialogue" as competition. Tudge maintains that, in the natural world, "each individual must take everything else into account" in order to survive, finding "a limited number of solutions" to the particular problems they are faced with. The lineage of plants has reinvented, over and over again, the form of the tree. It is an "optimal solution", though manifest in tens of thousands of fabulously different ways.'

Nature has, in the words of Thorpe 'an innate desire to co-operate'. Once again, I walk around our garden with fresh respect. No more will I apologise for being a 'tree hugger'!

But how much is to do with knowledge that we are just discovering and how much is to do with knowledge we have lost? A lot is said about the disconnect between our children and the natural world, but I think this is a much more ingrained

problem than something that has just arisen over the last 40 years.

Did our ancestors, illiterate as they may have been, have more innate knowledge of the complexities of the lives of their non-human neighbours than we do? Did this lead to them having more recognition of, and respect for, the interdependence upon which our world is based? Has our concentration upon our language systems and literacy, our overweening pride in our human achievements, in fact led us up a blind alley, thinking, in the words of Adam Thorpe, that we were 'master of the game'? Are we now discovering, perhaps too late in the day, a need for a greater humility in relation to the other creatures who share our planet? Problematic and worrying thoughts, which I must not let distract me from the practical things I can do to help.

Back to Laney and her simple, practical advice for the wildlife gardener who wants to help bees and other insects:

- 'go native' - plant a wide variety of wildflowers ('bees that feed on one type of pollen are nutritionally stressed')
- let grass grow longer for clover to flower (white clover can feed bees' in the June 'hunger gap')
- leave weeds - 'weeds' are wildflowers!
- leave wild open spaces unworked to provide habitat for solitary bees

What a great set of tips for those of us wanting to 'do our bit' in the fight against biodiversity loss!

Finally, I think the last word should go to Laney:

'Consumerism is a poor price to pay for the wonder of our environment'.

Janice Scott
December 2017