
Flowers for Wildlife



Flowers are very important to wildlife. They provide nectar, which is food for insects such as butterflies and bees; leaves, for caterpillars and beetles to hide in and eat; hollow stems for insects to hibernate in; night scent, which attracts moths (which attract bats); and seeds, a source of food for birds throughout the winter.

The organic grower encourages flowers, along with **trees** (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/trees-wildlife>), **shrubs** (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/shrubs-wildlife>) and **water** (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/creating-pond>), to provide a valuable and diverse ecosystem.

Many of our native creatures are also predators of garden pests. Did you know that a ground beetle eats slugs? And a family of blue tits can eat 100,000 aphids a year? Natural pest control is an essential aspect of organic gardening.

Below is a selection of useful flowering plants - including weeds, grasses and wildflowers - to attract a diversity of wildlife to your garden. Most are native. Some, such as Michaelmas Daisy and Poached Egg plant, are non-native but easy to grow, and provide useful food early and late in the year. See also **How to grow Flowers the organic way** (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/node/1084>), which includes a helpful guide to making a wildflower area.

Coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara*. Native. Perennial weed.

Bright yellow, early spring flowering, dandelion-like flowers. Seeds loved by birds. It is worth keeping a few of these weeds, but their deep rooting rhizomes can become troublesome.

Grows in most soils.

Cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*. Native. Annual

Beautiful blue flowers in summer attract hoverflies and parasitic wasps (see Beneficial Insects (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/beneficial-insects>)). Seeds loved by birds. Needs full sun. Grows in most soils preferring neutral to acid.

Cowslip, *Primula veris*. Native. Perennial

Delicate yellow flowers appear in the spring, popular with bees. Foliage provides food for butterflies such as Duke of Burgundy Fritillary. Sun/partial shade. Prefers neutral to alkaline soils.

Cranesbill, *Geranium pratense*. Native. Perennial

Blue/purple flowers in the summer. Foliage is food for butterfly larvae such as Brown Argus. Prefers rich, moisture retentive soil.

Hemp agrimony, *Eupatorium cannabinum*. Native. Perennial

Pale mauve flowers are attractive to many insects, and birds. Grows in damp ground, especially useful for growing on banks of ponds and streams.

Evening primrose, *Oenothera biennis*. Native. Biennial

Tall-growing plant with pale yellow flowers, highly perfumed at night. Seeds are attractive to birds, flowers to night moths. Grows in most soils.

Fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare*. Native. Perennial

Umbel of scented yellow flowers are especially attractive to hoverflies, parasitic wasps and bees throughout the summer. (See Beneficial Insects (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/beneficial-insects>)). Seeds are popular with birds, hollow stems offer hibernation site for insects, such as the ladybird. Grows in most soils.

Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*. Native. Biennial/perennial

Tall spire of purple flowers late spring/late summer are popular with bees. Suitable for shady area. Prefers nutrient-rich, moist soils.

Forget-me-not, *Myosotis arvensis*. Native. Annual

Pale blue flowers favoured by bees. Birds such as the bullfinch enjoy the seeds. Prefers damp soil conditions.

Grasses, e.g. cocksfoot, Yorkshire fog. Native. Perennials

Caterpillars of butterflies, such as Speckled Wood and Scotch Argus, feed on the leaves. Tussocks also provide habitat for beetles, spiders, frogs and toads. Suitable in any type of well drained soil, preferring full sun.

Honesty, *Lunaria annua*. Non-native. Biennial

Purple flowers followed by easily recognised silver coin like seed-pods that last all winter. Birds such as the bullfinch feed on seeds.

Can grow in semi shade and in most soils

Michaelmas daisy, *Aster* spp. Non-native. Perennial

Purple to pink flowers attract butterflies, bees and hoverflies in the autumn. Britain's only native aster, *Aster tripolium* has pale mauve flowers and is suitable for salt marsh sites.

Grows in most soils.

Stinging nettle, *Urtica dioica*. Native. Perennial

Provides food for the early nettle aphid and therefore ladybirds. Caterpillar of the small tortoiseshell butterfly eat the foliage before pupating. Can grow in semi shade

Grow in most soils.

Poached egg flower, *Limnanthes douglasii*. Non-native. Annual (pictured)

Bright yellow, white edged flowers; very attractive to insects, and can flower for nearly twelve months of the year. Also useful as winter ground cover.

Prefers well-drained soils.

Primrose, *Primula vulgaris*. Native. Perennial

Pale yellow flowers appear in the spring and are an early source of nectar for bees. Leaves are food for butterflies such as Duke of Burgundy Fritillary. Can grow in full sun or semi shade.

Grows well in nutrient rich, moist soil, neutral to acid.



Goldenrod, *Solidago virgaurea*. Native. Perennial

Flowers are attractive to many insects. Common on heaths and dry banks.

Grows well in most soils.

Sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*. Non-native. Annual

Bright yellow flowers in the summer attract butterflies and bees. Seeds are popular with birds. Large seed heads can be stored for use in winter. Requires full sun.

Grows in fertile, well draining soil.

Teasel, *Dipsacus fullonum*. Native. Biennial (pictured) Pale mauve flowers July – August. Bumblebees and other insects feed on the pollen. Tall, striking dried flower heads provide seeds throughout the winter for birds, especially goldfinches.

Will grow in most soils including stream banks, neutral to alkaline.

Thrift, *Armeria maritime*. Native. Perennial

Pale pink flowers popular with bees, flowering March to September. Useful for rock gardens, dry stone walls and sink beds. Prefers full sun.

Requires well-drained, poor soil.

Tobacco, *Nicotiana* sp. Non-native. Mostly annuals.

Several species available, many are night scented. Popular with butterflies and night flying moths, including the Convolvulus hawkmoth. Can grow in light shade to full sun.

Will grow in most soils.

Violet, *Viola odorata*. Native. Perennial

Food for butterflies including the High Brown Fritillary. Prefers woodland semi shady sites.

Moist soil with plenty of organic matter. Neutral to alkaline.



Wallflower, *Erysimum cheiri*. Naturalised, short-lived perennial.

Seeds are popular with birds. The scented flowers provide nectar to many insects early spring. Full sun.

Prefers well-drained, poor soil, neutral to alkaline.

Stinking hellebore, *Helleborus foetidus*. Native. Perennial

Pale green flowers January to March are important for early bees.

Prefers semi shade and well-drained alkaline soils.

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Our charity brings together thousands of people who share a common belief - that organic growing is essential for a healthy and sustainable world.

Through campaigning, advice, community work and research, our aim is to get everyone growing 'the organic way'.

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