

BFPC Biodiversity Report, March 2021.

1. Young Trees.

Last year's plantings are still in dormancy, though the buds on many are starting to swell. Approximately 30 young trees from residents' gardens were added in January to the original planting of 104. Four of the latter did not make it through the long drought, so the additional ones have more than made up for the losses.

Most of the trees will have had a jute mulch mat placed around them by the end of the month. This should greatly aid their resilience to any future dry spells and will suppress weeds.

A lot of marsh thistles (*Cirsium palustre*) have taken root among the trees. This is a biennial which can reach 2m in height. It attracts more than 80 species of bees, butterflies and other insects. Ideally the tree plantation will eventually have a diverse selection of wildflowers. However, the thistles could become something of a nuisance this early in the trees' development, taking up valuable nutrients and crowding out other species. I would like to propose that they be selectively thinned out by using a propane gas "weed wand". A short burst of flame aimed at the growing point of the thistle should do the trick. No need for weed killers.

Marsh thistle:



Thanks to lockdown 3.0 the Tree Guardians have hardly got off ground. However, it looks as though gatherings of six people outdoors will soon be permitted, so that will be the signal to engage the community again.

2. Hatt Roundabout.

At the start of a new growing season the roundabout will soon be having its first all-over cut, in line with our (and Cornwall Council's) "Grow not Mow" policy. Thereafter, the only cuts will be of the circumference, and the north-south and east-west lines of sight. These will enable clear views for safe crossing of the A388 by pedestrians. There will be a final all-over cut in September. We are hoping that the wildflower seeds donated by Cllr Ellis will be seen in bloom this year.

Just now there is clear, but rather sad, evidence of what happens when grassland is not managed effectively for wildflowers. Residents may remember that some years ago the roundabout and approach verges of the A388 were planted with daffodil bulbs. For the first year or two they made a very striking display. Now, however, the only area that has a full flush of blooms is a small patch near the traffic sign on the south-western verge. The roundabout itself has just a handful of rather forlorn-looking survivors. The reason for this is that the roundabout and most of the approach verges were traditionally cut in early spring soon after the daffodils had finished flowering. This did not give the bulbs time to recover by means of the photosynthesis through the leaves which were shorn far too soon. The small patch near the traffic sign were spared this treatment and continue to thrive.

By the same token, if we want to increase biodiversity via restoring wildflower grassland, we must schedule the cuts so that the flowers have time to bloom and set seed. This means leaving them to do their thing between April and September.

Cllr Malcolm Fletcher.

