

Biodiversity Report August 2021.

1. Roundabout.

After the unplanned and unwanted cut it got from Cormac in June this year there has been a welcome recovery of flowers, including red clover, birdsfoot trefoil, vipers bugloss, toadflax, mallow, cut-leaved cranesbill.

These are not “showy” flowers, but they are vital resources for our native pollinators. It is a mistake to think that wildflower verges will always be a blaze of colour like traditional borders full of bedding plants. The crucial thing is that they are helping to restore some of the damage that has been done by years of mismanagement. We have to get used to appreciating the finer detail of our native flora. Taking time to stand, look and marvel.

It's worth remembering too that the visual impact of wildflower verges and meadows is simply a bonus side effect. Some 84% of EU crops are pollinated by insects. Honeybees are just one of the insects that do this. The majority are wild bees, beetles, flies, wasps, moths and butterflies. These need wild flowers to tide them over between commercial crops. Their larvae need a much larger variety of wild plants, including many “weeds” such as nettles, on which to develop.

As an aside, it is worth considering the carbon footprint of a tray of annual bedding plants from a garden centre:

- Plastic tray!!
- Often imported from Holland
- Compost often contains peat

Better to grow your own from seed, especially if they are self-seeding annuals that just do their own thing and save you the trouble. Or buy/raise from cuttings perennials that will give you years of pleasure and turn out cheaper. Everything you plant and keep in the soil will help to sequester carbon dioxide.

2. Ragwort.

BFPC reported the growth of several clumps of Ragwort along the verge of the A388 which borders the Recreation Field to Cornwall Council Highways (Cormac). Cormac replied that following an inspection it was not deemed to be a problem, and no action was required. BFPC challenged this decision, but by reply were told that Highways policy now is that no action is taken control Ragwort if it is more than 50m from cattle pasture or fodder crops, and that moreover it is a valuable source of pollen for pollinators. Councillors questioned the 50m distance, and it was agreed to check this.

3. Trees.

The plantation along the A388 has had a mixed year. The species that are doing well appear to be the birch, hazel, oak, beech, hawthorn and the dogwoods. However, the rowan (mountain ash) seems to have been attacked by fire blight. This is caused by a bacterium. Leaves turn

yellow, then brown. Unfortunately, there is no cure, and we will most likely lose them. However, there will be an opportunity to replace them with donations of self-sown trees from residents' gardens this autumn.

Last year there was very little regrowth of "weeds" and brambles around the trees. After the sterling work done by our groundsman Nick there was little time for them to recover. However, this year they have really taken off. Not so much the brambles, but grass, thistles, fleabane, trefoil, hemp agrimony and others have taken advantage of the clearance to germinate and proliferate. While a few of us have done battle, the earlier lockdowns and Covid restrictions have often made it difficult. We need new plan for the long-term maintenance.

Cllr Malcolm Fletcher, August 2021.