

Biodiversity panel session questions answered

[the following questions were sent in advance of the actual seminar]

Question one

What herbaceous plant would the panel recommend that delivers the most biodiversity benefit, whilst being attractive to people too, as well as having a long season of interest to both wildlife and communities?

Responses

From Tracy Lambert, Cumbernauld Living Landscapes: If they have the space, Napeta giant does wonders in the Edinburgh Botanics - lots of pollinators on this one. I would also suggest a native species such as comfrey, again great for bees.

From Anthony McCluskey, Chair of Garden for Life Forum: Catmint has a long flowering season and is very easy to maintain. It's attractive to bees and butterflies.

Question two

Over the years we have tried various combinations of summer-flowering plants in our planters, but by far the best show comes from non-stop begonias. They flower profusely even in poor summers. However, their double flowers are not bee-friendly. Are there any good alternatives?

Responses

From Anthony McCluskey, Chair of Garden for Life Forum: We have a list of alternatives here: <https://gardenforlifeblog.wordpress.com/2017/05/02/bedding-plant-alternatives/>
No one alternative with the bright colour and long-flowering that Begonias have.

Question three & four

I am particularly interested in the challenges facing Linlithgow. And the subsequent biodiversity problems as highlighted by Cumbernauld of planting annuals for impact in public areas. So, two questions:

Question Three: How can we educate the public to want different, more sustainable planting?

Responses

From Tracy Lambert, Cumbernauld Living Landscapes: Be candid with people, tell them exactly how much things cost but do it through a newsletter, blog on the web etc., don't just rely on face to face contact. The discussion you have with someone may be forgotten by the end of the day.

There is a tendency from the general public that everything we do is funded by government which simply is not the case. Local community groups are often taken for employees of i.e. Scotrail or Abelio in the case of station adopters, or volunteers mistaken for council park employees. Get your brand right and be vocal about that brand, raise the challenges you face and then how you have positively achieved them even under the most trying of times; again, get that information out there to the wider community too. Be heard but be positive.

If the public understand who you are as a group or community they will tend to listen more to your challenges, get your local councillors and MSP on board to keep them all up to date with how things are going.

Consult with the public - ask them what they want to see and explain the limitations at the time, include them (public) in your work.

Get the public out on pop up volunteer days; show them how much work it takes and equate that time into a monetary value – one volunteer donating a day = £50.

Question Four: And what can we plant for colour and impact?

Responses

From Anthony McCluskey, Chair of Garden for Life Forum: see response to questions one and two.

From Tracy Lambert, Cumbernauld Living Landscapes: From my perspective (native species lead) this all depends on the soil type, nutrient and moisture content and would have to be assessed on a case by case basis.