



RHS It's Your Neighbourhood School Project

Two RHS It's Your Neighbourhood group members established a gardening/wildlife club at a local school which is now run through the school as an outdoor education programme. During the winter of 2012, the group decided to clear an area at the back of the garden. The patch of ground had become overgrown with laurel, gorse and brambles. The group organised a working party to clear the area and parents volunteered to help with strimming, planting hedging, pruning and chipping the cuttings. A barbeque was arranged for the helpers and parents which proved to be a fun event. Some of the brambles have been left in an adjoining patch to provide habitats for birds and some pollinators. In the spring this area was planted with flowers which are attractive to pollinators, using plants grown from seeds. Many of the plants have self-seeded and there was constant colour over the summer of 2014. More plants have been added including foxglove, teasel, primroses and forget-me-nots. Lots of bees and other insects have been attracted to this area.



Following a talk from a local beekeeper (one of the children's grandfather), the club planted up a bee-friendly garden. This has now been established for a year and is flourishing and has attracted lots of insects. The club also hatched out some painted lady butterflies.



SUCCESSSES

The successes have been that there has been an increase in the number of insects visiting the planted areas and the growing interest of the children and neighbours in the project. The project helps the children to connect to nature, allows them to work outdoors and encourages observation of birds and insects and overcomes inhibitions about wildlife.

CHALLENGES

Clearing the overgrown area was a challenge because of the amount of material which needed to be removed. However help from parents and volunteers at the working party/barbeque enabled the area to be cleared successfully. The limitations of the site mean that water supply can be a problem but the group have built up a good relationship with a neighbour who helps them when the school is closed.

LOOKING AHEAD

The children will be encouraged to learn about the different insects visiting plots and how to identify the different bees, wasps and hoverflies. They will also learn about the importance of pollinators and pollination, both for their garden and in the wider environment.

Top Tips

- When tackling big clearance/planting projects link with a social function to encourage volunteers to come along
- When parents/neighbours see the benefits they are willing to share/provide plants and resources