

BBC
breathing
places



SOW
some wild
flowers

A stylized illustration of a daisy flower with a dark center and white petals, positioned to the right of the main title. The flower is shown from a slightly elevated angle, with its stem and a small green bud visible.

pocket guide

BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

Go wild with Breathing Places at:
bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

“My dad taught me all the names of wild flowers when I was very small. It’s very important to know.”

Mackenzie Crook
Actor



Flower power

You might think of your garden as just a dot on the landscape, but look at it from a bird's-eye view. There are over 15 million gardens in the UK, and if we all do one thing for nature it will have a huge impact.

And there are lots of easy ways to make your outside space a magnet for wildlife without compromising your patio or decking. And the great news is that research shows it benefits us too! The show of colour, the movement and sound of the plants and wildlife plus some fresh air can help us achieve a sense of well-being.

No garden? No worries! Even a pot or window box can make a difference.

Successful sowing

All gardens are different, so find out:

- whether yours faces north or south
- what sort of soil you have got
- whether it gets morning or afternoon sun

Knowing these answers will help you put the right plant in the right place. For example, some plants like hotter, drier spots, while others will wilt without shade – creating a curving border will increase the variety of shady and sunny spots.

Soil texture and acidity will also affect which plants will thrive in your garden:

- Heavy clay needs plants which cope with wet, sticky soils, like selfheal and water avens.
- Chalky soil isn't great for acid-loving plants. Instead, try kidney vetch, greater knapweed or salad burnet.
- Sandy soil might need compost or you could try drought-tolerant plants, like sea holly and sainfoin.

Test your soil type using a simple kit from the garden centre.

Nurture natives under threat

One in five native plants – some of the best for wildlife – are under threat of extinction. Why not have a go at growing some of these yourself and then try finding them in the wild?

- **Maiden pink** has disappeared from half its sites in the UK. It loves sunny rock gardens.
- Introduce stunning native alliums – **wild leeks** – to your flower beds. At over six feet high their purple flowers never fail to impress.
- Almost 90% of **chamomile** sites in Dorset have disappeared. It is a delicious addition to any herb garden and makes a delightful, scented lawn.

Be sure to check your native plants and seeds really do come from the UK, not abroad. To be safe it is best to buy wild flowers or seeds from specialist suppliers.

Don't take plants directly from the wild or plant your own there either. Neither will benefit nature.

For sunny spots

With extreme weather like floods and drought already challenging nature in the UK, choosing plants which can cope with these changes will not only benefit you, but will also help wildlife too.

For sunny, dry spells, why not try some of those listed here? All can thrive without much water, and bees and butterflies will love you for it too:

- Cornflower
- Corn marigold
- Field scabious
- Greater knapweed
- Marjoram
- Musk mallow
- Poppy
- Viper's bugloss

Why not consider some rock and wall plants too, such as:

- Basil thyme
- Bell heather
- Biting stonecrop
- Common rock rose
- Perennial flax
- Rock cinquefoil

To find out how to create a wild flower meadow, check out: bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

And not so sunny spots

Shady and dry – Don't be surprised that shady spots can be dry – soil dries if tree roots suck out the moisture. Try:

- Bluebells
- Columbine
- Foxgloves
- Green hellebore
- Lily of the valley
- Tutsan

Shady and moist – Great for:

- Lungwort
- Oxlip
- Solomon's-seal
- Sweet violet
- Wood crane's-bill
- Wood spurge

Dappled shade – Hedgerow plants tend to enjoy both sun and shade. Mix in smaller wild flowers with existing shrubs and climbers. Consider:

- Bastard balm
- Betony
- Dog violet
- Everlasting pea
- Primrose
- Red campion

Boggy spots – For really damp soil, try creating a bog garden. Use:

- Bugle
- Cuckoo flower
- Marsh marigold
- Purple loosestrife
- Ragged robin
- Yellow loosestrife

Flower

bingo



You now know many by name, but how many have you seen in the wild?



Bluebell – Best seen carpeting woodlands in May but also found in some grassland. Not to be confused with the non-native Spanish bluebell.



Cowslip – Appears in April and May. Once common in meadows, this plant can now be seen on verges.



Seen



Seen



Foxglove – These tall, elegant flowers favour woodlands and moors, and appear in June. They are extremely popular with pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies.



Seen



Poppy – Once a common sight in fields of corn, these familiar emblems of remembrance are now more commonly seen in gardens than in the wild.



Seen



Ragged robin – Its delicate petals are deeply divided to give its 'ragged' appearance. It likes moist soil. Disappearing from the wild as wetlands have been drained.



Seen



Sea thrift – Reminder of seaside holidays. It is mainly found growing on cliffs and forms clumpy carpets of colour.



Bingo!

Do One Thing

Interested in finding out more about wild flowers? Try some of these ideas:

Research, research, research

Organisations often rely on the public to help them collect valuable information about nature. Why not get involved by taking part in a survey? Ongoing projects include Plantlife's Common Plants Survey which monitors changes to the wild flowers in our countryside. Also try the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

Get inspired

Take a walk in the countryside and see how nature combines plants to wonderful effect – whether in a bluebell woodland in spring or chalk downland in summer. Visit gardens with a wild flower theme to find out how they have succeeded.

Plant swap

If wild flowers crop up everywhere in your garden, or you're very green-fingered, why not swap plants with friends? Be careful not to give them invasive aquatic species though!

Plant a wild window box

A great alternative when space is limited. Include early flowering bulbs as these provide vital nourishment for bumblebees awaking from hibernation. If your window box doesn't catch rain, water it regularly and use mulch to keep it damp. For inspiration regarding suitable wild flowers, check out Flora locale or PlantforLife.

Wild flower art

Take along a sketch pad or water colours when you next go out on a walk or nature-related activity. It's a fantastic way to relax and could also provide you with some great pieces to hang at home. Need help identifying what you see? Check out UK Safari.

Lend a hand

Help to conserve the UK's most threatened plants by doing some volunteer work. Lots of organisations have opportunities, from becoming a Plantlife Flora Guardian to restoring grasslands with The Grasslands Trust or re-creating landscapes with The Wildlife Trusts.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: [**bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces**](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)

**do
one
thing**

For more ideas of what you can
do for nature, why not check out
other Do One Thing activities at:

bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

With thanks to:

Plantlife
www.plantlife.org.uk

The Wildlife Trusts
www.wildlifetrusts.org

Design: red-stone.com
Printed on 100% recycled paper

© Published by
BBC Learning 2009

BBC
**breathing
places**