

# Pollination and Pollinators



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Why they count



Pollinators, including bees, butterflies and beetles, are a crucial part of our eco-systems. As well as pollinating **1/3 of global food crops** they pollinate **80% of wild flowers in Europe.**

It is estimated that if we had to perform the task of pollination ourselves it would cost between **£182 billion and £448 billion a year**

As well as the vital work of pollination, pollinators are a crucial part of our eco-systems and the food chain upon which other life, including birds, mammals, other insects, and ultimately humans depend.

## Pollinators in decline

Pollinators and all other insects are in decline

globally. According to [The Wildlife Trusts](#) current rates of decline could lead to the extinction of 41% of the world's insect species over the next few decades. Bees and butterflies are amongst the most at risk.

## Habitat loss and monocrops

Pollinators, like humans, need homes and a source of food. **With 97% of wildflower meadows in Britain lost to human development and agriculture since the 1930's** the need for viable homes is increasingly urgent.

Agricultural land is frequently mono-crop which means that for the pollinator population not only is there a lack of diversity but the supply of food ( nectar and pollen) is limited to the flowering period of one crop instead of being spread out over the season through a range of different plant species flowering at different times of the year.

Imagine humans trying to deal with mono crop shopping. Our shops would only stock one

product each, e.g. potatoes, and only when they are in season. No wonder pollinators are declining at such a rapid rate.

## Pesticides

Adding to these problems is the issue of pesticides. In our quest for higher yields, higher profits and cheaper food we have poisoned our fields, rivers, lakes and waterways with chemicals designed specifically to kill insects. Pesticides increase crop yields but at a very high environmental cost.

In 2014 the UK government published [The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England](#) which

“recognises that pesticides are one of the potential pressures that pollinators face. It also recognises that some pesticides, including neonicotinoids, have the potential to damage pollinators. The Government continues to support strict regulation of pesticides”

In 2018 the EU banned the use of ‘Bee-Killing’ Neonicotinoids following significant research proving their harmful effects.

**But in January 2020** only weeks after leaving the EU, UK environment secretary George Eustace **authorised the use of bee killing neonicotinoids** after lobbying from the sugar beet industry.

The UK is not alone, 16 different EU countries have issued emergency [authorisations to use these banned pesticides since](#).

This TED talk sums up [Why Bees are Disappearing](#)

## The good news

The good news is that individuals and communities can take actions to support local pollinator populations and be part of the fight to protect and conserve our native wildlife.

**Private gardens in Britain cover an area bigger than all of the country’s nature reserves combined,**

estimated at over 10 million acres. Individual gardens may be small but they create important green links between urban nature reserves and the wider countryside, forming [vital wildlife corridors](#).

The potential of the country's millions of gardens to help counteract some of the habitat losses that we have experienced in the last 50 years is enormous.

In addition, communities up and down the country have been campaigning to encourage their local councils to make public land pesticide free.

## What actions can you take?

**Campaign against the use of pesticides** in your town and local council with support and guidance from [Make my town pesticide-free](#) by PAN UK which has successfully supported communities and individuals to make the switch to pollinator friendly practices.

**Join your local wildlife trust** [The Wildlife Trust](#)

**Make your garden pollinator friendly** to be part of a movement that helps to combat the mass extinction that is happening all around us and hitting the smallest creatures on the planet hardest.

There are **5 key steps** you can take to support your local pollinators.

1) Make your garden a pesticide free zone  
[Gardening without pesticides.](#)

2) Leave a wild patch in your garden to create habitats for insects [Wildlife Gardening.](#)

3) Don't mow your lawn, or don't mow all of it.  
See [Plantlife](#)

4) Plant for pollinators (see our planting guide)

5) Make a bee hotel for solitary bees (see our guide to bee homes)

Explore our resources and links for further guidance, planting ideas and inspiration on all of the above.

[Plant A Pot For Pollinators](#) + [video](#)

[Helping Pollinators locally](#)

[No Insectinction](#)

[The Solitary Bees](#)

[Pesticide-Free Challenge for Kids](#)