



The Walled Gardens of Cannington



www.canningtonwalledgardens.co.uk

Wildlife and sustainable practices are an important factor in how the Gardens operate. Many improvements have been made to make the Gardens more eco-friendly, and in turn support wildlife.

For example, the Gardens have ceased using neonicotinoid pesticides, linked to the decline in bee numbers. The use of synthetic pesticides has been minimised and an Integrated Pest Management approach has been adopted. This involves ensuring that plants are healthy by maintaining cultural conditions that are hygienic and appropriate to the plants, including correct levels of watering and fertilisation and use of a leaf tonic. Alternative pest and disease control methods are also used as needed, including the introduction of beneficial insects and fungi. This year we have also introduced over 50,000 insects to our Botanical Glasshouse to help control pests and diseases. One of these insects is the wasp *Encarsia Formosa*, which are about 0.6 mm long, and are used for controlling whitefly. Although related to the wasp it is much smaller, and it does not sting humans! It lays its eggs in the whitefly and when the larvae of the whitefly reaches maturity the parasite attacks the vital organs. If you look closely the attacked (and now dead) whitefly will have a black hole where the wasp has eaten its way out of the whitefly host!

We are concerned about the amount of plastic being sent to land fill and seek to minimise this through the use of wooden plant labels and growing our bedding plants in bio-degradable pots which can be planted straight into the ground. We also grow our plants in peat-free compost. We harvest the rain water from our glass house and make use of bore hole water when watering the Gardens. With water conservation in mind, we recently installed drip irrigation in our Collections Garden in order to save water and reduce the incidence of fungal diseases which are increased by use of sprinklers. We also recycle our garden waste by making our own compost, which we then re-use in the Gardens.

Another recent addition to the Gardens is a butterfly planter, donated by Woodbloxx, which has been designed with the College's Horticulture students and the Butterfly Conservation charity, to attract the species. Students, staff and Cannington in Bloom committee members also cleared and planted a native wildflower area in the Gardens, which helped feed pollinators in the spring. The group then went to work creating bug hotels to provide winter habitats for insects and small animals such as toads and hedgehogs, using recycled materials foraged from around the College's Cannington Centre. This was in celebration of the RHS and the Wildlife Trust's initiative 'Wild About Gardens Week'.

Alan Hold from Butterfly Conservation said, "I am delighted the planter has been placed in The Walled Gardens of Cannington in support of the important work Butterfly Conservation carries out. The garden staff will ensure that a carefully planned planting scheme will provide a colourful display of plants, supplying essential nectar for a range of insects, from early spring to late summer. It is hoped that visitors to the gardens will be encouraged to include many of the plants displayed in the planter in their own gardens, so that they can enjoy the delight of visiting butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects."

The Gardens are also hoping to create a hedgehog colony, taking in displaced hedgehogs from the local animal charity Secret World Wildlife Rescue. The Gardens offer a perfect habitat for hedgehogs as there are plenty of grubs, beetles and insects for them to eat and cover for hibernation.