



Pollinator Pathway Project

Help bees, butterflies and wildlife thrive in your community

A pollinator pathway is a connected network of pollinator-friendly spaces that provide food, shelter and breeding opportunities for bees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and other vital insects.

Even small patches of pollinator-friendly habitat can make a big difference when linked together across a village, neighbourhood or town.

This project is perfect for:

- Local community groups
- Village & Parish councils
- Schools and churches
- Resident associations



Step 1: Build your team

Just three or four motivated volunteers can successfully create a pollinator pathway. But of course, many hands make light work.

You will want to assign roles including a project coordinator, a volunteer organiser, a communications lead and the designer of your pathway.

Step 2: Identify potential sites

Look for spaces that could be transformed into pollinator-friendly habitat.

The idea is to create a series of linked habitats rather than one isolated area. This is so insects can travel easily between sites.

Good locations include:

- Road verges
- Village greens
- Church yards
- Housing association land

Step 3: Check Permissions

Before planting anything, establish who owns or manages the land.

Not only is it important to get permission, but you should also agree who will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance.

For roadside verges, always seek formal permission from the relevant highway authority before carrying out any work.

You may be asked to carry out a risk assessment, or provide proof of public liability insurance before any work can take place.

Step 4: Design the pathway

You don't need to be an architect, town planner or even a designer to plan the layout of your pollinator site.

All you need to think about is if you are going to spread seed on the ground or if you will need to use planters (I.E raised flower beds), how much sunlight and water your chosen site gets, as well as the soil type. (As this influences the plants you will choose)

Ensure the pathway doesn't encroach on existing footpaths, access ways, cause a trip hazard or inconvenience .

Take some measurements and sketch this out on paper until you are happy with the design. (If you require permission for the site the land owner will need to approve the layout.)

Step 5: Choosing the right pollinator-friendly plants

For sunny areas



Common Knapweed
One of the best UK pollinator plants.



Cornflower
A UK-native wildflower great for bees.



Bird's-foot Trefoil
A valuable food source for bees and butterflies.

For shady areas



Wood Avens
A common plant of hedgerows and woods.



Red campion
Food for many insects including butterflies.



Primrose
Flowers early spring, good food for beetles.

Step 5: Add the extras

Pollinators need more than flowers. If you want to truly make your pollinator pathway perfect for butterflies, bees and other insects then consider adding some of the extras that they love.

- Log piles
- Leaf piles
- Stone piles for insects
- Small wildlife pond

Even a few simple habitat features can significantly increase species diversity.

Step 6: Plan for the long-term

This is the most important step. Many projects fail because maintenance is not considered at the start.

Whilst most wildflowers don't need watering (Except in severe droughts) you will probably want to schedule annual weeding, cutting and other maintenance with your volunteer team.



Step 7: Shout about what you're doing!

Installing simple signs helps explain why the area has been created, which pollinators and wildlife species are being supported, and how local people can get involved.

Clear signage can also help residents understand why areas may be left less frequently mown than traditional green spaces. Keep the community engaged by sharing updates, photos and success stories through local Facebook groups, parish newsletters, school communications, local newspapers and the Net Zero Heroes website.

Celebrating milestones such as planting days, flowering displays or increases in wildlife sightings can help build support for the project and encourage more volunteers to get involved.



Common Concerns: Bee Stings, Insects and Hay Fever

Some residents may be concerned that creating pollinator-friendly areas will lead to more bee stings, unwanted insects or hay fever. These concerns are understandable, but in practice the risks are usually low and can be managed through good project design.

Bee Stings

Bees and other pollinators are generally not aggressive and will rarely sting unless they feel threatened or are accidentally stepped on or handled. Most pollinator-friendly plants simply attract insects that are feeding on nectar and pollen. To minimise concerns, avoid planting directly alongside narrow paths, playgrounds, benches or building entrances.

Insects

A pollinator pathway will increase the number and variety of insects using the area. Most of these insects are harmless and play important roles in pollination, pest control and supporting local wildlife. Information signs can help explain why insects are important and encourage people to see them as a valuable part of a healthy ecosystem.

Hay Fever

Wildflower areas are often mistakenly blamed for hay fever. In reality, many colourful wildflowers rely on insects for pollination and produce relatively little airborne pollen. Hay fever is more commonly triggered by wind-pollinated grasses and some trees. Regular maintenance, including the annual cutting of meadow areas and careful plant selection, can help reduce potential issues.

