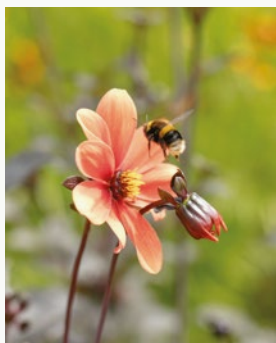




*Our guide to*

# THE BUMBLEBEE GARDEN



DUCHY *of* CORNWALL  
NURSERY





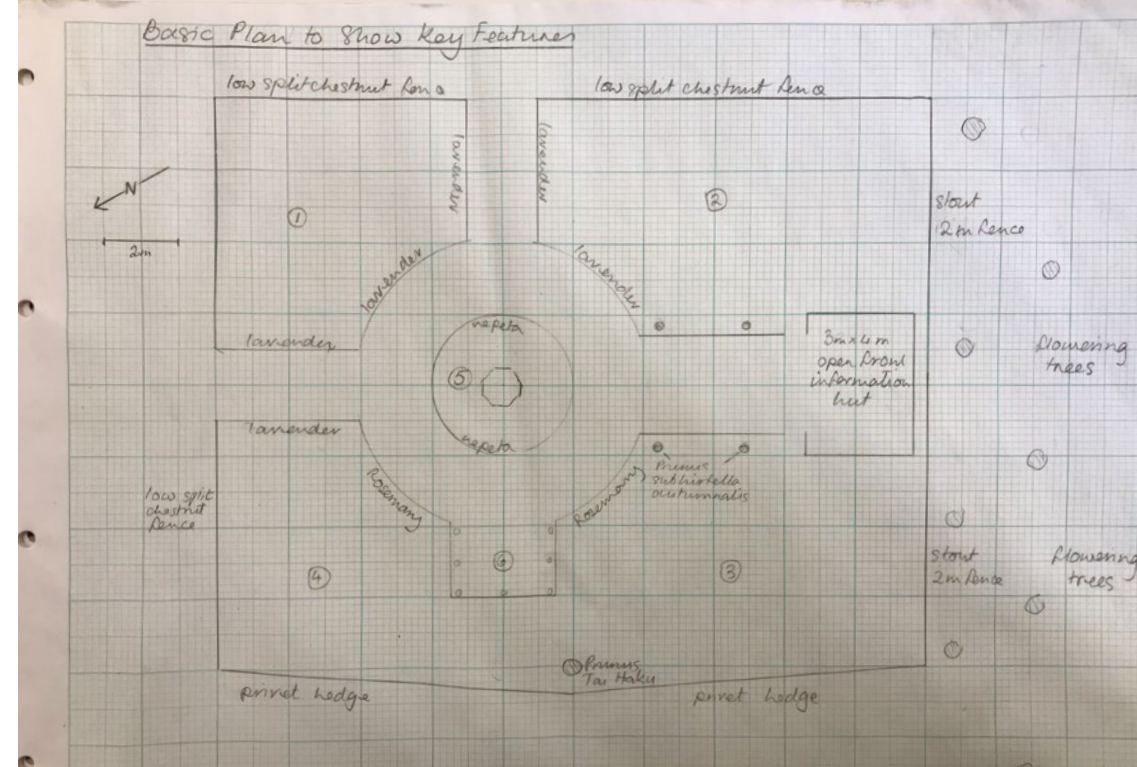
## WHY BUMBLEBEES MATTER

Everyone loves a bumblebee, but maybe not everyone understands how important they are. It is estimated that over three quarters of our food crops require pollination by an insect, and bees pollinate around one third. Bumblebees can pollinate a wider variety of food crops than honeybees. They can fly and pollinate at lower temperatures than honeybees and are more efficient at pollinating crops grown under cover. Many non-food crops, for example cotton, also rely on bee pollination.



It's not just the pollination of commercial crops where bumblebees are vital. Bees have co-evolved with flowering plants for millions of years. At all stages of their life cycle bumblebees feed exclusively on nectar and pollen collected from flowers, and in doing so they pollinate the plants. As well as commercially produced crops, they also pollinate wild plant species, from trees down to the smallest plants. In this way they support the biodiversity of our wild flora, which in turn supports other insects and animals. The seeds and fruits eaten by birds and small mammals will have come from plants pollinated by bees. Bees are vital links in all parts of our ecosystem.

In the UK a bumblebee's natural habitat is flower rich meadow, hedgerow and woodland. Consumer demand has driven the pursuit of ever-increasing efficiency in farming methods which in turn has led to the loss of 97% of our wildflower meadows since 1945. With this habitat loss, and increased use of pesticides, bumblebee numbers have plummeted, and two species of our bumblebees have become extinct. In the UK growers of crops such as tomatoes and strawberries now import colonies of bumblebees from Eastern Europe to ensure adequate pollination of their crops. With this comes risk of introducing disease which could further threaten our native bumbles (and other bees). There is, however, plenty we can do. It is easy to help bumblebees by providing flowers yielding pollen and nectar, and provide sites for nesting and hibernating. In this way the collective efforts of individual gardeners can make a significant difference for very little cost or effort.



## THE FIELD OF DREAMS

Following changes to the nursery layout, including the construction of the new shop and café, we were left with a spare patch of ground below the sales terrace. This northwest facing slope used to be terraced to accommodate growing nursery stock. Below the surface the ground was compacted by tractor paths and riddled with trenches for irrigation pipes. The terraces were levelled, a layer of topsoil was added, and grass seed was sown. Nursery staff referred to this patch of grass as the field of dreams while its future purpose remained undecided.

The grass grew, and so did a vigorous crop of docks and grassland weeds, which all had to be dug out by hand. To this day we are plagued by weed seeds, especially docks.

With bumblebees very much in mind, Alasdair Moore, who was our Horticultural Manager at that time, came up with the idea of creating a garden for bumblebees, and through the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, a grant application was submitted and at the end of 2017 funding secured to build the garden. The aim is to show how an ordinary garden can be a haven and food source for bumblebees without compromising the qualities we want from our gardens.



Gillian Burke officially opens The Bumblebee Garden, July 2019.



## MAKING THE GARDEN

Work on the site began in 2018 with the construction of paths, an information hut, a rabbit-proof fence, and the installation of a water supply.

A compost bin was placed in the corner to re-use our garden waste and provide a potential hibernating site. A covered seat adds a focal point and resting space. Planting began that summer but was delayed by a heatwave and completed in the autumn, and spring 2019.

The area is divided into five sections, or beds, each with a different selection of plants, and a different feel. The sections are a kitchen corner, a shrub and shade garden, a wild garden, a flower power garden, and a circular central bed. The lower boundary of the garden has a privet hedge, which is allowed to flower. Dead leaves and trimmings are left under the hedge as potential nesting sites.





## THE PLANTS

Every plant in the garden has been selected for its pollen and nectar value for bumblebees, and for its visual qualities, ease of cultivation and availability. In addition, the plants are chosen to flower at different times so there is always food available, particularly early and late in the year. There are many, many other suitable plants besides those used.



### KEY PLANTS:

Salvia nemorosa 'Caradonna'  
Cerinthe major 'Purpurascens'  
Rosa 'Blue for You'  
Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'



### CENTRAL CIRCULAR BED:

This bed is planted in shades of blue, mauve, and white to act as a visual beacon for bees on the wing. Though bees detect odours from flowers when they are close, colour is the main attractor from a distance, and their eyes see blue, green, and ultraviolet (but not red).

## THE SHRUB AND SHADE GARDEN

This area has a selection of flowering shrubs and trees underplanted with bulbs and herbaceous plants which are mostly spring flowering.



### KEY PLANTS

*Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso' (edging the bed)  
*Cotoneaster* 'Cornubia'  
*Arbutus unedo*  
*Morus nigra*  
*Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis Rosea'  
*Myrtus communis*  
*Hebe* 'Wiri Prince'  
*Pulmonaria* 'Opal'  
*Pulmonaria* 'Raspberry Splash'  
*Helleborus x hybridus*  
*Narcissus* 'Tete a Tete'  
*Ajuga pyramidalis* 'Black Scallop'  
*Symphytum* 'Wisley Blue' and 'Hidcote Blue'  
*Myosotis* (forget-me-not)  
*Verbena bonariensis*

## THE WILD CORNER

This is an informal area with a rough grass bank on the northwest side which is offered as a nesting site. The planting is mostly pale flowers, and a half barrel filled with water is an added attraction for wildlife.



### KEY PLANTS

*Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis Rosea'  
*Prunus* 'Tai Haku'  
*Rosa rugosa* 'Alba'  
*Rosa* 'Blanche Double de Coubert'  
*Lonicera fragrantissima*  
*Ribes sanguineum* 'Pulborough Scarlet'  
*Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace'  
*Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk'  
*Rosa* 'Starlight Symphony'  
*Pulmonaria* 'Raspberry Splash'  
*Veronica gentianoides*

## KITCHEN CORNER

The front of this bed is edged in thyme, and herbs are planted next to the arbour. Both are left to flower. There is a patch of strawberries, and two currant bushes for fruit. Most of this area is planted with seasonal vegetables with companion planting.



### KEY PLANTS

Herbs in variety, including rocket, chives, oregano, thyme, and borage.  
 Seasonal vegetables including peas, beans, courgettes, leeks, artichokes  
*Calendula* (marigolds)  
*Tropaeolum* (nasturtium)  
*Lathyrus odoratus* (sweet peas) against fence  
*Helianthus annuus* (sunflowers) against fence



## FLOWER POWER

This is the summer powerhouse for providing nectar, pollen and colour. It is a mixture of annual and perennial flowers, with roses along the fence.



### KEY PLANTS

- Lavendula x intermedia* 'Grosso' (edging the bed)
- Rosa* 'American Pillar'
- Rosa* 'Wedding Day'
- Rosa* 'Perennial Blush'
- Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton'
- Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer'
- Knautia macedonica* 'Melton Pastels'
- Cephalaria gigantea*
- Lupinus* 'Noble Maiden' and 'The Chatelaine'
- Eupatorium maculatum* 'Riesenschirm'
- Pericaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea'
- Penstemon* 'Blackbird' and 'Pink Bedder'

## ANNUALS

Annuals are used extensively and encouraged to self-seed, so individual varieties have probably hybridised. Seedlings pop up in all parts of the garden (and further afield). We also sow new varieties every year to keep the garden full. This means it may sometimes be difficult to identify an individual flower.

### KEY ANNUALS

- Lathyrus odoratus* (sweet pea)
- Helianthus annuus* (sunflower)
- Eschscholzia* (Californian poppy)
- Calendula* (marigold)
- Tropaeolum* (nasturtium)
- Ammi majus*
- Daucus carota* (wild carrot)
- Centaurea* (cornflower)
- Nigella* (love-in-a-mist)
- Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens' (Honeywort)
- Cosmos*
- Antirrhinum* (snapdragon)







## Further Information

[www.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org)  
Bumblebee Conservation Trust

[www.beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://www.beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org)

A wonderful site where you can check the bumblebee value of the plants in your garden

[www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators](http://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators)  
Not exclusive to bumblebees, but lists of wild and garden plants of value to pollinators

[www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/gardening-for-bugs/gardening-for-bumblebees/](http://www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/gardening-for-bugs/gardening-for-bumblebees/)  
Useful ideas for gardening with bumblebees

And finally, on behalf of the bumblebees of Cornwall, and all our visitors to the Nursery, we thank the Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust whose generosity made this garden happen.

*Ask the nursery team for lots more handy hints and information.*



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01208 872668 | [duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk](http://duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk)  
Cott Road, Lostwithiel, Cornwall PL22 0HW