

Developing a Garden for Pollinators at the Halfway House

In 2019 we created a pollinator garden which was kindly supported through the **Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, by the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust** and by **West Midlands Butterfly Conservation**.

The creation of the garden did not go according to plan. It was originally envisaged that we would dig a garden that we would then fill with a mixture of annual and perennial plants with some larger shrubs at the back. However, when we started to dig, we quickly found that the ground was full of numerous rocks and boulders which needed a pickaxe to remove them.



The rocky substrate also meant that the amount of good quality soil for planting was often low so we needed to buy extra compost to give the plants more chance of establishing and we needed to mulch the garden to stop it from drying out and needing constant watering. We also did not realise just how many rabbits we already had (probably as a result of creating a much larger lawned area in 2018) or that fallow deer were such regular visitors to the property.



The regular presence of both these grazers meant we had to fence the garden. Initially we just did this with wire netting and road pins but we had to quickly protect both this netting and our visitors with a solid post and rail fence on health and safety grounds.



The garden is enhanced by a pollinators information board which is a real focus of interest for our visitors who have made lots of positive comments about it. The post and rail fence inadvertently has created a very good leaning spot for viewing the pollinators using the

garden with good numbers of bees and other insects regularly being seen including many Red Admiral and Painted Lady butterflies being seen on our Verbena (purple flower in the photo below) by both our staff and visitors.



This project has also benefitted other parts of the Halfway House garden. We have left areas just to grow, created a wildflower bank (using a combination of seeds and seeing what plants naturally establish) and a willow weave enclosure (which we started planting in 2019).



In 2020 we managed to hold an early small work party (photo above right), we have seen Brimstone butterflies regularly with a female laying on two of the Buckthorns planted in the garden. We have also seen Orange-tip, Holly Blue, Green-veined White and Speckled Wood butterflies as well as Peacock nectaring on our Perennial Wallflower.



The garden is now looking great and it is a real shame that visitors to the Wrekin cannot currently enjoy it. We would like to thank everybody who has helped. It has been a very enjoyable communal effort.

<https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/>

<https://www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/>