

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

Listen...
 With faint dry sound,
 Like steps of passing ghosts,
 The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
 And fall. - Adelaide Crapsey

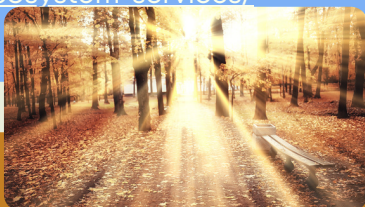


Health - Naturally

Trees help our health in so many ways. Spending time with trees and in woodlands can be calming, inspiring and help with reflection and mindfulness.

They also help us indirectly by providing eco system services that can help manage our environment to keep us cooler in summer, they help with air quality, sequester carbon, manage and filter rainwater and stabilize soils to mention just a few.

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/valuing-and-governing-tree-and-forest-ecosystem-services/valuing-tree-and-forest-ecosystem-services/>



Learn more - leaves and twigs

Woodland Trust - Tree Identification

The Woodland Trust has some great Tree ID guides for all the family to use. In winter, when trees are bare, it can be tricky to tell them apart, but The Woodland Trust twig ID sheet can help. It features pictures of twigs and their buds so you can match them up to the trees you find outdoors. Looking at fallen leaves is also great for learning about the trees that have dropped them.



<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/03/tree-id-kids/>

Green Champion Coordinator update

I had the pleasure of attending the **Swirly Snail Trail** organised by Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) in Kingston Hill Local Park in October. The park is in one of the red wards that were identified through the Environmental Justice Mapping which highlighted inequalities across the city with wards ranging from “red” to “green” <https://naturallybirmingham.org/environmental-justice/>. The project is currently focused on 6 of the red wards: Bordesley and Highgate, Nechells, Balsall Heath West, Gravelly Hill, Pype Hayes and Castle Vale.

The pilot ward for the City of Nature Programme was Bordesley and Highgate, which is in Ladywood Constituency, where 5 public open spaces and parks are being improved through the Future Park Standard process. Knowing how important community cohesion is in the red ward areas we feel it is important to support opportunities like the Swirly Snail Trail event to bring communities together to enjoy nature on their doorstep.

For this event Helen from BOSF who has been working in Bordesley and Highgate ward throughout the pilot, worked alongside Our Scene CIC, who devised the Snail Trail around the park. Children were given trail maps and had to find different snails hidden around the park to find letters which then formed an anagram (which turned out to be the name of the Park). Our Scene CIC also provided tea and coffee and other fun games. The Active Well Being Society were on hand to provide free hot food. Nearly one hundred families completed the trail and were excited about the activities taking place in the park. I have spoken with local residents who were keen to do more in their parks and open spaces and as a result I have recruited more Green Champions to work together in the local area to enjoy further community events and to be in the great outdoors. Many thanks to West Midlands Police for their attendance and other supporting organisations.

Here's looking forward to the next community event.



Please contact me at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk if you would like to find out more about joining us for our Green Champions autumn / winter programme.

Connect:



Please come and join me, the City of Nature Team and other Green Champions for our chat online via Zoom on 22nd November, for an hour before tea time 6.30pm - 7.30pm.

If you receive this Newsletter by email you will already have been sent the link, don't forget to put a note in your diary.

If not you can book via Eventbrite (click below) to get the meeting link sent to you:

Join us for an online chat



Nature's Calendar - Winter visitors and snoozers

As winter gets closer it brings very different challenges to the UK's wildlife – temperatures are lower and food is often harder to find and you may wonder what happens to wild animals. There are lots of different ways they cope with our winters. Some, such as swallows and swifts, will migrate south to Africa, searching out hotter climates. Others, like foxes and badgers, will grow a thicker coat to help keep them warm.

Only three UK mammals truly hibernate; bats, dormice and hedgehogs. It is important to think about where hedgehogs might hibernate in our gardens, as Guy Fawkes night can mean building a bonfire, don't forget to check them for snoozing hedgehogs before you light them on the night.

It is also a fantastic month for spotting some winter visitors to the UK including Fieldfares, Redwings and Waxwings (pictured) which has silky, grey-pink plumage and fabulous crest. Look for a black bib under the beak and a black eye mask. It gets its name from the waxy red tips coating some of the wing feathers. The end of its squarish tail is bright yellow, with some yellow highlights also on the wings.



<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2022/01/british-winter-birds/>

National Tree Week - 20th November 2023

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/seasonal-campaigns/national-tree-week/#:~:text=National%20Tree%20Week%20is%20the%20UK%E2%80%99s%20largest%20annual,taking%20place%20bet%20ween%2025%20November%20%E2%80%93%203%20December>



National Tree Week is the UK's largest annual tree celebration. Each year, the country's conservation sector, volunteer groups and tree-lovers come together to plant thousands of trees to mark the start of the tree planting season.

National Tree Week 2023 is taking place between 25 November – 3 December.

The winter planting season is here so it's the perfect time for people to get outdoors and get involved with tree planting.

Trees and hedgerows are some of the most powerful tools we have in the fight against climate change. And the good news is that we can all make a difference by planting a tree! But it does need to be the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-plant-tree>

Whether you plant a tree in a pot on your doorstep, a hedge in your garden or organise a community event at a local park, every tree will help grow a greener future together.

You can find out more about planting trees in Birmingham by getting in touch with Birmingham's Tree People: <https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/>



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Kingston Hill Park

Kingston Hill Park is in Bordesley and Highgate Ward, it has six entrances with a main one on Kingston Rd, B9 4JB. It's situated across the rail tracks from St Andrews Football Ground and close to Watery Lane Middleway where there is access to the Birmingham and Fazeley canal.

The park has large areas of open grass, but it also has areas of trees that can make the park feel a bit enclosed but provides a good level of biodiversity. The most obvious features in the park are the spiral path, which from the air looks like a giant snail, spirals up a large mound with a stone circle at the top and various standing stones around the site. There is a small play area which is looking a bit tired but is still well used.



In 2018 10 new trees were planted: <https://btfl.org.uk/2018/12/11/lord-mayor-joins-archway-students-at-kingston-hill-park/>

Poppies for Remembrance Day - 12th November 23

During WW1, much of the fighting took place in Western Europe. The countryside was blasted, bombed and fought over repeatedly. Previously beautiful landscapes turned to mud; bleak and barren scenes where little or nothing could grow.

There was a notable and striking exception to the bleakness - the bright red Flanders poppies. These resilient flowers flourished in the middle of so much chaos and destruction, growing in their thousands.

The amazing sight of these Flanders poppies was due to something often referred to as a soil seed bank. Often deep in soil there are dormant seeds of plants that have previously grown there and are just waiting for the right conditions to germinate and flower again.

Poppies and other wild flowers often appear on ground that has been disturbed not only by human actions but also by animals especially cattle, churning up or turning over the soil as they move about bringing the seeds to the surface.

Not only do fields have seed banks but there are also rich woodland seed banks. This has been demonstrated, for example, when they conducted germination trials from soil cores taken from (two depths in) ancient woodlands. Seeds from some 81 different species germinated.

We have also created artificial seed banks in very secure buildings to keep a supply of seeds safe for the future:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/12/what-is-a-seed-bank/>



Birmingham City of Nature - Green City Action G8

An increase to the tree canopy coverage across the city, through the Birmingham Urban Forest Master Plan (G8)

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our_future_city_plan_ofcp/2518/our_future_nature_city_plan

The Urban Forest Master Plan is a strategic document that states the intentions for the trees and relevant natural capital of Birmingham. It details a long-term approach with an action-based strategy. It focuses on how the city will develop and manage its urban forest in the years to come. The plan defines the aspirations of the council, its urban forest managers, and key stakeholders.

<https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/about-us/the-urban-forest-master-plan/>



Your Space - Your Words - Yours Views

From Meena

At St Margaret's Allotment in Ward End, I run a gardening club on Tuesdays and Thursdays with Hester, between 12 and 3pm. There are raised beds designed specifically for people with disabilities who would like to garden. One bed is specially set up for a person in a wheelchair. Another bed is for people who may struggle with bending low. There is also a three-tiered bed that a parent and child can work at. The club is open to all ages and all abilities.

I also volunteer at the Library of Birmingham in centenary square, working on the terraced gardens on levels three and seven. There is lot of weeding and pruning required. I work in all weathers and sometimes it can get very windy. Sadly, the weeds are not recycled in the green waste, it is put into skips of general waste.

At Small Heath library I planted up their waste area with herbs and flowers, and now they are complaining that it is encouraging the rats to play there. In autumn there are a lot of leaves that cover the footpath between the library and the wellbeing centre.

I did request the library if they were able to obtain a green bin to collect the leaves into for the simple process to making leaf mould rather than using plastic bags. Unfortunately, this has not been possible.



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

Road Safety Week will take place 19-25 November 2023.

Every year, thousands of schools, organisations and communities get involved to shout out for our right to make safe and healthy journeys every day:

<https://www.brake.org.uk/road-safety-week/take-part>

To be able to move to a net zero city we want to encourage active travel which for many people means walking. But roads need to be safer for more people to feel happy about walking more often. At this time of year with shorter days and a lot of people travelling during darker mornings and evenings especially children it is important to make sure you can be seen: <https://www.think.gov.uk/resource/lesson-2-be-bright-be-seen/>

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero you can contact the team on:
routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk



Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with us for nature's recovery across Birmingham and the Black Country; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife. Get involved and find out more about their events in Birmingham and the Black Country.

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/>



BOSF - Find you local Friends of Open Spaces Group

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. They produce regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. They can also put you in touch with other groups who have experiences that might be useful to you.

<https://bosf.org.uk/members/>



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<https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

