

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

The time when skies are free from cloud,
Though still the robin whistles loud
In the bare garden croft,
The catkin, on the hazel tree,
Mistakes for summer flower the bee,
And round it hovers oft. - George Walter Thornbury



Health - Naturally

Good friends are good for your health. Friends prevent isolation and loneliness and give you a chance to offer needed companionship, too. Friends can also:

- Increase your sense of belonging and purpose
- Boost your happiness and reduce your stress
- Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise

Enjoying nature with a friend old or new can increase the benefits of being in nature, you could just ask someone to join you on a walk



Learn more - Bird Boxes

Making a nest box - National Nest Box week

Our gardens, parks and woodland are often tidier than they used to be, so birds can't always find natural holes to make a home. There are also fewer nooks and crannies in modern buildings. The populations of many bird species are down as a result of this "housing" shortage.

The good news is that everyone can do their bit to help and your own garden's a great place to start. You can learn how to make a bird box by watching this video



https://youtu.be/dUq0_id41-A?si=rzpJ5rn3Z0dPKY0i

City of Nature Programme update

From windowsills to wide open spaces.

Helping nature recover and connecting people to their natural world across the whole city may sound like a big job, and it is. But you don't have to start big and you don't have to do everything at once.

The Green Champions programme started with the idea that everyone should be able to grow something on their windowsill or maybe their garden. That could be at home but also perhaps at work or at school. Watching a plant grow from seed is a very special experience. Eating something that you have watched grow from a seed is even more special. But there is one more step that increases the wonder of it - taking the seeds from the new plant and growing more plants next time, perhaps giving them away to friends. How fantastic is that?

And those people that you give a plant to could become friends who you go to the park with for a chat, to slow down a little. Then the park visit might become an organised walk that more people join, you could become a group. Maybe a have picnic in the park together in the summer or a littler pick if it needs it, plant some plants in the park, for other to enjoy. It can keep growing.

Then a longer journey to visit the Lickey Hills, Sutton Park, The River Cole or Woodgate Valley - Birmingham's Countryside. Once you have done that you can go further to the big wide open spaces around the West Midlands and beyond. See forests and big skies and be inspired. Bring back home the pictures and the memories, tell the stories and inspire more people to grow something on their window sill and start their journey.

That's really what being a Green Champion is, if you want to find out more or share your inspiring stories you can contact us through this email address. We hope to speak to you soon.



Please contact us at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk if you would like to find out more about joining the Green Champion Development Programme.

Connect:



Please come and join us for our online lunchtime chat via Zoom on 23rd February 2024

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 get the link by emailing us on Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk and we will email you the link.

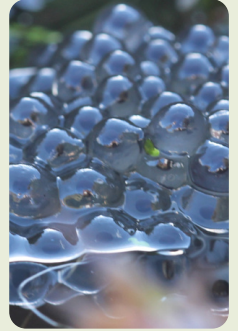


Nature's Calendar - Frogspawn

Frogspawn appears in ponds from January onwards, depending on the weather and the region (the South West usually has the first sightings). By March, you should be able to spot frogspawn in ponds across the UK. The frogspawn you're most likely to see is that of the common frog. In spite of its name, the common frog is not necessarily common - in many areas of the countryside they have completely disappeared due to agricultural pesticides, draining of wetland habitats and filling-in of small ponds. Females like to lay their spawn in well-vegetated, shaded, shallow ponds. However frogspawn can appear in many places including buckets and puddles.



As the eggs mature, the clusters of spawn swell and float to the water's surface. There may be so many clusters in a pond that they merge to look like one jelly mat. Frogspawn is therefore difficult to miss! There's no such thing as too much frogspawn, so don't worry if your pond is full of it! In fact, the more the better - only around one in 50 eggs laid will survive to adulthood. If you don't have a garden pond, why not head out to your local park, nature reserve or wood and keep your eyes peeled for ponds that may have frogspawn?

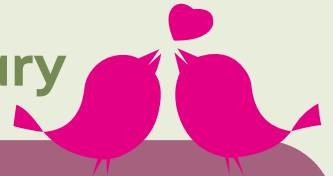


But please don't move frogspawn or tadpoles into a different pond. It may not have the right conditions for them to survive, and there is also the risk of spreading disease.

<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/advice-resources/survey-methods-hub/pondnet-spawn-survey/>



National Next box week 14th - 21st February



Traditionally, boxes for small birds are put up in early spring before the new breeding season starts. That's why they launch Nestbox Week on February 14th – St Valentine's Day – when birds are reputed to start their courtship.

In reality, some species will already be hunting for nest sites long before this date. Juvenile birds may even begin to select potential sites during their first autumn and winter. Boxes that are in place by the autumn may well be used as roosting havens in extremely cold winter periods, so the best advice is to put up your box as soon as it's ready.

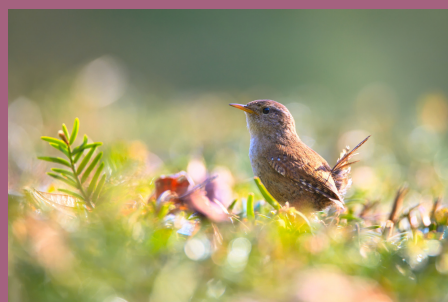
How many nest boxes lie unused in garden sheds, waiting for that ideal moment? There's no time like the present !

But birds nests vary in size and shape and can be made from twigs, moss, grass, mud and feathers. Some birds don't even use nesting material. Cup-shaped, woven nests are typically found in trees and bushes. Some species, such as blue tits, ducks and owls, use tree cavities. For more information please check out:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/birds/nests>

and

<https://www.nestboxweek.com/why-nest-boxes-are-so-important>



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Garrison Lane Park

Garrison Lane, Bordesley, Birmingham B9 4LG. There are entrances off Witton Street, Lower Dartmouth Street and Garrison Lane. The park has surfaced paths and benches and a children's play area. There are avenues of mature plane trees around the park and large areas of grass. Part of the park is being transformed into a more natural space with wildflowers and spring bulbs recently added to the area. There is also a small quiet corner, which is hard to achieve in such a busy part of the city. There is an large mural of animals in the centre of the park and foxes, squirrels and crows are the easiest to spot visiting the park.

The surrounding area is said to have been where the real peaky blinder gangs hung out, with the old Garrison Pub close by.

Keep an eye out for a blog about the park coming soon:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/blog/>



Imbolc - 1st February

Imbolc or Imbolg is also called Saint Brigid's Day which is a Gaelic traditional festival.

It marks the beginning of spring, and for Christians, it is the feast day of Saint Brigid, Ireland's patroness saint.

It is held on 1 February, which is about halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Historically, its traditions were widely observed throughout Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man.

Imbolc is one of the four Gaelic seasonal festivals, along with: Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhain. Daylight is increasing and spring is in the air. While too early for planting gardens, Imbolc was a time to start thinking about what you wanted to plant and harvest in the coming year.

Imbolc celebrations included lighting fires to warm the frozen land and hanging a four cornered Brigid's Cross above doorways to bless and protect a home. In modern day living Imbolc and the quiet weeks post holiday season is a great time to reflect and think about where you want to go in the coming months.

February is certainly a time of joy, rebirth, reawakening and purifying. Whether you celebrate or not, here are a few examples of appropriate blessings to suit the occasion of Imbolc.

May flowers always line your path and sunshine light your day,

May songbirds serenade you every step along the way,

May a rainbow run beside you in a sky that's always blue,

And may happiness fill your heart each day your whole life through.



Birmingham City of Nature - Green City Action G8

Safe and attractive routes for walking and cycling (H2)

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



Under Healthy City the plan will address one of the themes prioritised in the 25 Year Environment Plan: “For adults, exercise plus access to green space brings significant benefits in terms of reducing the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases, type two diabetes, hip fractures, bowel, and breast cancers. Older adults also benefit from reduction in levels of obesity, numbers of fractures and reduced death from cardiovascular diseases.



Your Space - Your Words - Your Views

From: City of Nature - Community Facilitator

My work is about helping people connect with the nature on their doorstep in some of the most urban areas of the city.

By sharing information, making connections, finding solutions and keeping communication channels open so conversations can take place, I hope to help people find and enjoy the amazing natural diversity of the city.

From schools growing radishes in raised beds, to residents enhancing planting in housing areas and bird spotting walks in city parks. There is so much going on. But where things aren't happening we want to encourage, support, and involve people in their green and grey spaces, we are nature and it surrounds us, we only have to look, listen and make some space for it.

If we do this we can tap into our nature connectedness. This is a term that describes the strength of an individual's emotional relationship and attachment to nature. We are trying to understand how we can actively build new relationships with nature and repair the relationship where it is damaged.

We know that a closer connection with nature can boost both our health and the natural world. But it's about more than just being out in nature. It's about connecting with it, noticing it, and appreciating it. The implications for our wellbeing are huge.

Although a lot of my work is digital, there is nothing more enjoyable for me than being outside with people and seeing them enjoying nature. - Debbie



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

While efforts are ongoing to mitigate global warming, climate change is already impacting people's lives. Climate change adaptation involves adjusting our behaviour and building improved infrastructure to better cope with changing weather patterns.

Climate adaptation relates to actions that protect us against the impacts of climate change. This includes reacting to the changes we have seen already, as well as preparing for what will happen in the future.

We are taking steps to address the impacts of climate change to protect communities, our economy and the environment. Examples of this approach to climate adaptation include:

- planning for more green spaces in urban areas to help keep them cool and planting more drought-resistant plants.
- building infrastructure that can withstand expected climate impacts such as extreme heat and flooding.

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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Heritage Fund

