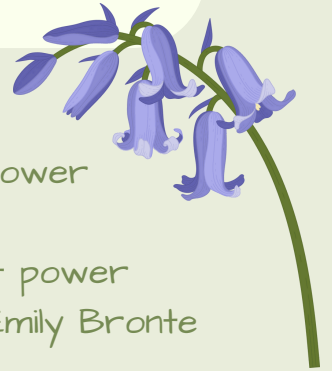


GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

The Bluebell is the sweetest flower
That waves in summer air:
Its blossoms have the mightiest power
To soothe my spirit's care. - Emily Bronte

Health - Naturally

National Walking Month - Living Streets

Walking is one of the easiest ways to improve our health and stay connected to our community, helping us feel less lonely and isolated. This year, Living Streets is inviting us to discover the #MagicOfWalking and celebrate the many health and happiness benefits of walking and wheeling. Living Streets have put together 20 tips to help you fit 20 minutes of walking into your day.

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/national-walking-month/>



Learn more - about compost

International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) - May 5 – 11, 2024

Soil health and productivity is dependent on organic matter – the essence of compost is to provide the sustenance for the biological diversity in the soil. Plants depend on this to convert materials into plant-available nutrients and to keep the soil well-aerated. Additional benefits include the reduced need for pesticide usage to ward off soil-borne and other plant diseases.

But it's even more interesting than that you can learn more here:

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/actions/how-compost-your-waste>



City of Nature Programme update

Young Green Champions - “100% of nurseries to be signed up to the Little Green Champions Programme by 2047”

100% is a very ambitious target for anything but the City of Nature Plan has this as one of its measurables. Why is it so important?

Multiple studies have shown that spending time in nature has numerous benefits for young children:

- **Cognitive Abilities:** Even a short time spent in nature can restore children’s cognitive abilities, improve attention spans, and boost mental resilience. Interestingly, this effect was observed even when children had only a view of nature from their classroom
- **Academic Performance:** Exposure to a natural environment seems to recharge children’s batteries, lower stress and anxiety, and enhance academic performance. This includes improvements in essential skills like reading, writing, and mathematics.
- **Physical Health:** Being in nature leads to improvements in general fitness, motor skills (both fine and gross), and coordination. Children are usually active and engaged when outdoors, which is excellent for their overall health.
- **Better Sleep:** Spending time in nature has been linked to better quality sleep for children. Fresh air, natural light, and physical activity contribute to improved sleep patterns.
- **Social Skills:** Outdoor play and adventure provide opportunities for children to develop social skills and make new friends. Nature encourages interaction and cooperation



Please contact us at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk if you would like to find out more about Young Green Champions and the City of Nature Programme.



Come and Connect with other Green Champions:



Please come and join us online via Teams on Friday 24th May 2024 1pm - 2pm for a short “Lunch and Learn” about how Birmingham is moving forward “No Mow May - What happens next?”

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

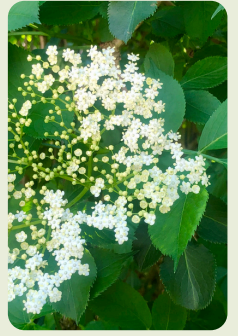
If not you can get the link by emailing us on Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk and we will email you the link.



Nature's Calendar - Elder flowers and Oxeye Daisies

The Woodland Trust's Natures Calendar

You can help The Woodland Trust track the effects of weather and climate change on wildlife near you. Join Nature's Calendar and let them know what's happening near you. You'll be contributing to a long biological record that dates back as far as 1736.



Elder is a relatively short-lived, sometimes scruffy-looking shrub or tree that grows in woodlands, hedgerows and scrub, on waste ground and railway embankments and in graveyards. Flat-topped clusters of tiny, creamy-white flowers start to appear from May. To many people the fragrance is sweet and summery and it attracts masses of insects.

The oxeye daisy is a typical grassland plant, and often thrives on roadside verges and waste ground, as well as in traditional hay meadows and along field margins. Its large blooms start to appear from May and are so bright that they appear to 'glow' in the evening, hence the other common names of 'moon daisy' and 'moonpenny'. It is easy to identify by its large, round white flower heads with a bright yellow centre that appear on single, tall stems. It has spoon-shaped leaves at its base and thin, jagged leaves along the stem.



<https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/what-we-record-and-why/species-we-record/>



“No Mow May” - 1st to 31st May

Don't Mow Let it Grow

Plantlife's #NoMowMay is back this year.

You can join their “No Mow May” movement. Don't mow this May and let it grow! But then - let it keep on growing for the summer if you can.



Plant life says: “We've lost approximately 97% of flower-rich meadows since the 1930's and with them gone are vital food needed by pollinators, like bees and butterflies. But your lawn can help! A healthy lawn with some long grass and wildflowers benefits wildlife, tackles pollution and can even lock away carbon below ground. With over 20 million gardens in the UK, even the smallest grassy patches add up to a significant proportion of our land which, if managed properly, can deliver enormous gains for nature, communities and the climate. This is why Plantlife calls for people to get involved with #NoMowMay every year, and let wild plants get a head start on the summer.

Best of all, to reap these benefits all you have to do is not mow your lawn in May and beyond!”

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/>

You can read about Birmingham's A to Bee Roads and Buzzing Parks here:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/2923/a_to_bee_roads



Walk to School and Outdoor Classroom Day

Living Streets - Walk to School Week is 20th to 24th May

Are your pupils ready to discover **The Magic of Walking**? This year's challenge encourages children to travel actively to school every day of the week. Meeting various magical beings along the way, they will learn about the important reasons to walk or wheel and its benefits for individuals, communities and the planet!

You can join in here: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-to-school/primary-schools/walk-to-school-week/>



Outdoor Classroom Day - 23rd May

Outdoor Classroom Day is a global movement to make time outdoors part of every child's day. On two days of action each year, teachers take children outdoors to play and learn. All year round, the Outdoor Classroom Day community campaigns for more time outdoors every day.

You can join in here: <https://outdoorclassroomday.org.uk/>



May - The month and the tree



In the calendar of the ancient Celts it is easy to understand the importance of the first day of summer known today as May Day, it has through the ages remained the most important day of the folklore year. Although we might think of the summer months as June, July and August the bursting of buds, frothy white flowers and verdant green that appears at this time of year probably explains this less calendar and more nature based celebration of the seasons.

Maypole dancing was described by the Puritans as 'a heathenish vanity' and was accordingly banned and did not start again until after the restoration of Charles II. Other ways to welcome the summer include the crowning of the May Queen, the mad antics of Jack-in-the-Green and the rampaging of the Hobby Horses! Beltane is generally thought to mean 'bright fire'. Bonfires are a focal point for all the Celtic celebrations at the opening of each season. In pastoral societies this was the time of year for grazing animals to be returned to green pastures. Just as Beltane fires light the eve of May, so bringing nature's greenery and flowers into homes on May Day symbolised and celebrated the renewal of life. Early in the morning was the traditional time to go into the woods and gather branches and blossoms from nature's refurbished bounty. It's an expression of a moment in the seasonal cycle, marking the start of the brightest and warmest quarter of the year. It's also a method of re-engagement with nature after the dark days of winter. Bright flowers on the table and green boughs around the doorway allows nature back into our homes, and we feel inspired to step out into the wild world once more. Hawthorn, also known as the May tree, begins to blossom at this time of year, It is a key cultural component of this month's many merry traditions, holding associations of frothing fertility and mischievous fairies. The rhyme 'here we go gathering nuts in May' originally derives from 'knots' of May – ie sprigs of hawthorn blossom.



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Salford Park

Lots of parks, around 130 (<https://bosf.org.uk/members/>) of the 600 plus parks we have in Birmingham, have a Friends of the Park group, and many other public spaces have community groups.

These groups make an amazing difference to the spaces they care for. But we want to highlight some of the other parks that don't have groups involved in their design, care and use yet but are still vitally important to the communities around them.

So our next park in focus is Salford Park. The park surrounds Aston Reservoir (also known as Salford Lake, Salford Park Pool or Salford Bridge Reservoir), a nineteenth-century reservoir built by the Birmingham Waterworks Company and formerly used for drinking water extracted from the River Tame.

The reservoir is a popular fishing venue and ideal for bird watching.

Close to the park is the Gravelly Hill Interchange (Spaghetti Junction) which is visible on the skyline. The River Tame flows from the north to the north-eastern corner of the park.

There is a pedestrian entrance on Lichfield Road and also at the west end of the site leading to Aston Hall Road and to the Birmingham Canal Navigations. Buses 65 and 67 buses stop at the park. Aston railway station is a five-minute walk away.

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9150/salford_park



Endangered Species Day - 17th May

Every year on the third Friday in May, thousands of people around the world participate in Endangered Species Day by celebrating, learning about, and taking action to protect threatened and endangered species. This global day of action and celebration was created and founded by David Robinson and the Endangered Species Coalition in 2006, and has continued ever since.

The People's trust for endangered species protect wildlife in Britain and around the world by bringing our most threatened species back from the brink of extinction. They do this through ground-breaking research, practical conservation and education, all with the help of their supporters.

Key species for Britain include hedgehogs and water voles ("Ratty" from Wind in the Willows was really a water vole not a rat.)

<https://ptes.org/campaigns/>



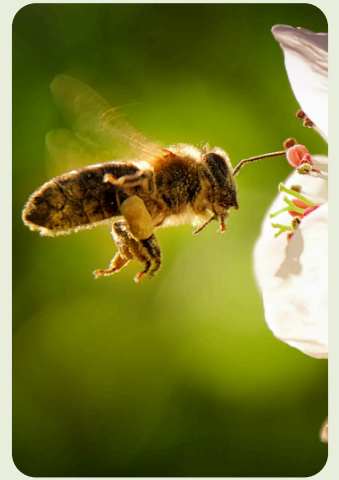
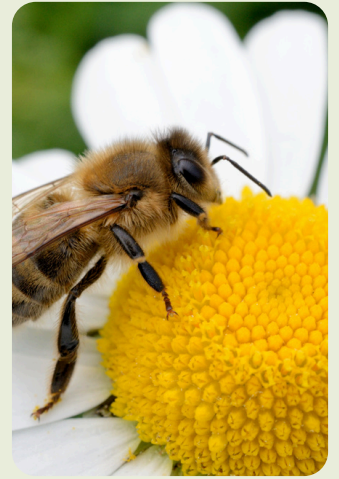
World Bee Day - 20th May 2024

Bees are so important to the health of our planet that they have their own special day.

World Bee Day takes place on 20 May each year, and its aim is to spread awareness of the significance of bees. Bee campaigners also ask people everywhere to do more to help and protect the special insects. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is urging everyone including governments, private companies, researchers and consumers, to take action to help save the popular pollinators.

You can take action by:

- Planting bee-friendly plants like heather and daisies and red clover on balconies, terraces, and in gardens can help.
- Leaving sections of the garden wild and letting the grass grow long gives the bees a place to shelter.
- Create a bee hotel for your garden's bee population.
- Leaving a small dish with a few pebbles and shallow water in can help if a bee is thirsty.
- There are also special bricks which bees can live in.
- Try not to use pesticides as they can be harmful to bees.
- Buy honey and other hive products from your nearest local beekeeper.



National Children's Gardening Week – May 25th to 2nd June 2024

National Children's Gardening Week celebrates the fun that gardens hold for kids. Children, parents, grandparents, schools or garden businesses can find ideas for fun garden projects and activities on this site:

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

Children love growing plants and being involved in the garden often excited to see instant results. National Children's Gardening Week aims to capture children's enthusiasm at a time when results are more immediate. National Children's Gardening Week takes place annually in the 'warm' week at the end of May. This means that pretty much throughout the UK they can plant all the popular plants with little fear of weather damage or the need for complicated protective growing.

National Children's Gardening Week was the brainwave of Neil Grant, Managing director of Ferndale Garden Centre near Sheffield who is also BBC Radio Sheffield's garden expert and co-presenter of their weekly garden phone in, and it's widely supported by the whole of the UK garden industry.



Birmingham City of Nature - Healthy City Action

Nature connectedness - whereby citizens understand the benefits of using green space and having contact with nature for physical and mental health (H1).

The National Trust says: Stepping out into nature and listening to birdsong can be a powerfully restorative experience. And with over 600 known bird species in the UK. Psychological study has found the calls of birds and other sounds of nature can help people recover much more quickly from stressful situations, compared with the noise of urban living. Birdsong is also a great way to identify different species, along with visual cues. With a bit of practice, you'll find they're easy to learn. You may already recognise blackbird, blue tit, chiffchaff and robin calls without realising it. Find out how you can use birdsong to identify the birds around you, next time you're in your garden or on a walk: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/nature/wildlife/our-guide-to-identifying-birdsong>



https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our_future_city_plan_ofcp/2518/our_future_nature_city_plan/2



Your Space - Your Words - Your Views

We would really like to hear from you.

We know that sharing ideas, asking questions, telling others about your work, volunteering experiences, things happening in schools, even the problems you face trying to improve things really help us all to keep up the great work that is happening across the city. My role in the project means I get to hear people's stories as we talk about people, green spaces and nature. These stories, hopes, anecdotes and memories become information that helps to shape how Birmingham's green spaces are designed, cared for and used.

There are formal ways to be involved in what happens in Birmingham, but it is often the ideas brewed over a cup of tea, or memories shared when making a daisy chain or concerns raised when we are just walking around a park listening for bird song that include the real gems. These might be called casual conversations but they are just as important when creating a City of Nature.

You can share your ideas, views or stories by emailing us on:
Cityofnature@Birmingham.gov.uk

Or you can join events run by all the different City of Nature Alliance Organisations: Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF), Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs), Legacy WM, Birmingham Treepeople, Patchwork Meadow, Learning Journey, The Parakeet, Ecobirmingham, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Canals and River Trust and Community Environmental Trust (CET)

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birmingham-city-of-nature-alliance/>



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

Water Saving Week – 23rd to 27th May 2024

Hosted by Waterwise Water Saving Week is a week dedicated to conserving this precious natural resource. With advice throughout the week on how to reduce your water usage and why it's important to do so, you'll be a super saver in no time!

This year marks the 8th year that Waterwise will be hosting Water Saving Week.

Throughout this week, their focus is on us as individuals. By incorporating small water-saving habits into our daily routines, we can collectively make a BIG impact on water conservation. From embracing the #leakyloochallenge to pinpointing areas in your household where water can be saved, we encourage you to actively participate!

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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Check our website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

