

PIMP YOUR PATCH

ISSUE 2
SPRING 2022



AN ONLINE MAGAZINE
FOR KIDS BY
ENVIRO-KID UK

[HUMANSHAVEBEENHERE.WORDPRESS.COM](https://humanshavebeenhere.wordpress.com)



IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome	1
Interview with Green Fingered George	2
Garden Scope	4
Garden Do's and Don'ts	5
Creating Wildlife Havens	6
Dogtastic Times	7
Building A Wildlife Pond	8
Spot the Difference	9
A Community Buzz	10
Litter Emergency	11
Draw a Frog Face	12
A Walk in the Woods	13
Words Search	14
Resources and links	15

WELCOME

Hi! I'm Enviro-kid and I love learning about nature and the environment.

The first edition of Pimp Your Patch was downloaded over 600 times and in a lot of different countries! Hopefully, there is lots to interest you this time too.

As I learn about the way our gardens, balconies and outdoor community spaces can support wildlife, I will share that information with you so that together we can help nature survive and thrive.

We will learn about ecology, how organisms relate to each other and their physical surroundings and also understand how being nature-friendly affects our own well-being.

Nature is balanced and fragile and we need to understand that actually, we are nature.

Thanks to all those who have helped with this edition. I hope you all enjoy it!

Enviro-kid.



AN INTERVIEW WITH

GREEN FINGERED GEORGE

Photographs copyright of [Green Fingred George](#).

For this edition I was lucky enough to interview George who has been helping to look after the Blue Peter garden for a few years now, he's also presented on News Round, the CBeebies programme called Teeny Tiny Creatures and so much more!

1. George, your dad got you into gardening; who's better, you or your dad, and why?

That's a good question!

I think with regards to gardening, probably my Dad is the better gardener, I have to admit, because he's got a lot more gardening experience than I have. He's self-taught and started our garden at home when I was really young. He's learnt a lot of the tips and tricks, where things can go wrong and where they can go right.

I've taken what he's taught me and used that knowledge to redesign my Grandma's Garden. However, with regards to birding I think I have the sharper eye!

2. Why do you like gardening?

It's a really good way to connect with nature, it's something that you can use your mind positively for, and it'll take you out of your head, with any issues you're having, by investing your energy into the garden.

You know there's so many positive benefits - it's a good way to help the environment, it brings people together, growing your own produce is always really satisfying and also seeing the wildlife that comes to your garden, knowing that the reason they're there is because of what you've created.

3. What has been the highlight of your career so far?

This interview 😊
I think when I went to Kensington Palace to judge the Blue Peter sculpture, with the Duchess of Cambridge for her 'Back to Nature' garden. Judging everyone's amazing entries was pretty mind blowing and I also bumped into Prince William whilst I was there, which was proper cool.
In terms of a gardening highlight, my work experience day at Chatsworth was really cool. It was amazing to see how a garden of that size operates and really interesting to see how horticulture careers work.





GREEN FINGERED GEORGE INTERVIEW CONT...



4. How did you get involved with Blue Peter?

I did The One Show first, as 'Titchymarsh', then I was announced as the first-ever RHS Young Ambassador.

Pretty soon after that, I got the call from Blue Peter to come on the show as a young gardener to inspire their viewers. Since then, I've worked on the Blue Peter Garden at Media City and helped the presenters give tips and advice.

It's been an incredible opportunity.

5. What is the least we should be doing in our gardens to support conservation?

I strongly believe that whatever space you've got, whether it's a 1metre sq garden, a yard, a balcony or even just a windowsill, putting out some greenery will positively impact the environment and the wildlife surrounding your area. Anything that's going to help our pollinators out. But of course, if you've got the space, whether it's a washing up bowl pond or a massive lake, get a pond in your garden, 'cos you will see how much wildlife is attracted by it; ponds are pretty special!



George was the first Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Young Ambassador; he is the British Dragon Fly Youth Ambassador and somehow, he also has time to volunteer for the RSPB.



[Click here to see George's Website](#)



[Click here to watch George's YouTube Channel](#)

BIODIVERSITY

GARDEN SCOPE

BEES BY BRIGIT



Photo copyright of @B_Strawbridge
<http://beestrawbridge.blogspot.com/>

Brigit says,

"Bees are amazing, and getting to know the ones who visit your garden can be a lot of fun! The easiest to recognise are probably the big gentle bumblebees, who visit flowers to collect pollen and nectar. If you see one carrying huge lumps of pollen on her back legs, like the one in this photo, you can be sure she is a female - either a queen, or a worker. Why? Because whilst the males spend most of their days drinking nectar from flowers, the females do all the work!

If you want to know more about bumblebees, visit the [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#), which has lots of activities for children".

Brigit Strawbridge Howard is a bee advocate, wildlife gardener and naturalist. She writes, speaks, and campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of native wild bees and other pollinating insects. Brigit is the author of [Dancing with Bees: a journey back to nature](#).

You can find out more about Brigit and her interest in raising awareness #of the importance of biodiversity on her website here. <http://beestrawbridge.blogspot.com/>



Photo copyright of @Stewchat
<http://boulmerbird.blogspot.com/>

Helping insects needs a little thought. We need to be mindful about what plants we use in the garden. The RSPB highlights the environmental implications of using bedding plants that may have been grown on an industrial scale. For example, their website states that some plants in garden centres may have come from abroad or been grown in peat. Instead of using these plants, to ensure we encourage pollinators we should grow native plants from seed or in the UK; we can source plants with the RHS 'Plants for Pollinators' symbol.

We can also consider the birds. Wildlife naturalist and photographer Richard Dowling suggests that planting our gardens with insects in mind will, in turn, help the bird population. Additionally, he suggests that we should also consider providing plants that provide winter seeds for birds. He believes that this would improve the diversity and health of birds overall.

In England, the main bird breeding season is between 1 March and 31 July, and unless the hedge is causing a threat to public health, we should avoid cutting our hedges in this time frame. Perhaps we could embrace Ireland's law, the public is prohibited from cutting, grubbing, burning or causing any other destruction of "vegetation growing in any hedge or ditch" between 1 March and 31 August. Sounds good to me!

Sources:

Richard Dowling: Twitter @DowlingWildlife and <https://www.instagram.com/DowlingWildlife/>

RSPB: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/plants-for-wildlife/planting-plan-for-wildlife-gardens/>

RHS: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators>

GOV.UK: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/3887/Hedges-and-the-Law/pdf/HedgesAndTheLaw.pdf?m=636735642239830000>

GARDEN DO'S AND DON'TS



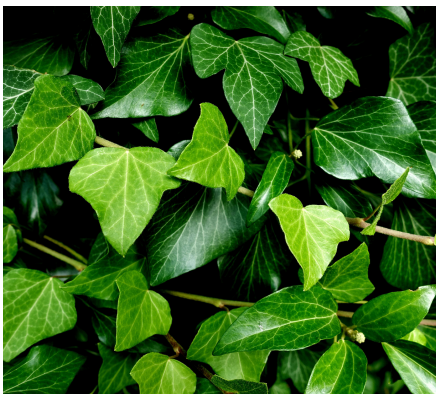
FAKE GRASS FAIL

Plastic grass reduces food and shelter for wildlife such as birds, bees and butterflies. It also has a high carbon footprint. Furthermore, it degrades and sheds micro-plastics into the soil when it gets hot, which can wash into our water systems. Please ask adults to consider creating a wildlife-friendly lawn instead if you can.



Dud Daffs

At this time of year, all around the UK, you'll see many displays of daffodils brightening up a dreary day. Unfortunately, although daffodils look fabulous, most of the daffs we see in our villages and graveyards don't provide much food for pollen-loving insects. This is due to breeding them for colour and shape rather than insects. We should try and move towards planting native daffodils that support pollinators. A few of the only places native daffodils can be found are Cumbria, Devon and the Black Mountains in Wales.



THE LAUREL AND THE IVY

Ivy is often misunderstood; however, it is brilliant for insects, birds and other wildlife. According to Irish Rain Forest expert Eoghan Daltun, it should always be left in place wherever possible.

On the other hand, Laurel isn't so good, especially in our UK woodlands. This is because some types can prevent other trees from growing, and although Roman Emperors were said to be huge fans of the Laurel tree, it doesn't offer much benefit to wildlife in the UK.

Don't forget to continue to dim the lights for birds at night.

We would all be better off if we could try and get back into the rhythm of dawn-day-dusk.

Sources:

Eoghan Daltun: @IrishRainForest <http://bearainforest.com/>

Woodland Trust: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2021/02/where-to-see-wild-daffodils/>

RSPB: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/plants-for-wildlife/planting-plan-for-wildlife-gardens/>

Light Pollution: <https://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/>



No matter where we live in the world, we should all be trying to create habitats that can support more wildlife: the more varied habitats we can create, the better.

Convenience driveways and gardens in the UK need re-thinking.

Some of our adults seem to be claiming their gardens just for themselves with no thought about the other creatures which could share the space. We need to encourage the adults we live with to reduce mowing this year and start growing flower gardens instead of just lawns. In the photograph above, no chemicals or artificial treatments have been used. The garden belongs to Stewchat, who says,

"Flower rich meadows have almost vanished from the UK. This makes it more important than ever to try to recreate them in our own gardens, no matter how small. I have an average-sized lawn, and since we have lived here, each summer, I allow about half of it to grow, uncut between April and September. This allows grasses and flowers to bloom and set seeds making the area much more attractive to wildlife and, in particular, insects. Bees, hoverflies, butterflies and grasshoppers now live where before there were none. Hedgehogs, Bats and Toads hunt there at night. It also helps the birds by providing food for their young and a place where all wildlife can find quiet refuge. It is much easier for a lazy gardener like myself to look after as there is less to cut each week! I much prefer to sit on a chair in the sun and watch the bees buzzing around the flowers. If you can, you should try it; you won't be disappointed...."

Please also ask the adults to stop completely paving over front gardens for driveways and if they have, ask them to reintroduce some planting and even a water source for our creatures. Doing little things like this might make a massive difference to our natural world and help heal the earth. And, always remember we might be small, but together we are mighty. #littlepeoplecanmakeabigdifference

Stewart, Northumbrian born and bred, is interested in natural history and wildlife.

You can find lots of interesting articles on Stewart's website [here](http://boulmerbirder.blogspot.com/). <http://boulmerbirder.blogspot.com/>



DOGTASTIC TIMES



I ABSOLUTELY LOVE DOGS, BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN OUT AND ABOUT IN NATURE WITH OUR FURRY FRIENDS.



We need to tell our parents and careers that we should be keeping our dogs under control in nature reserves, parks, fields and beaches. We need to create space for nesting birds, resting seals, livestock or other creatures who are just trying to carry out a quiet life without human disturbance.

Whilst I want to encourage everyone to get into nature and enjoy it, I think it is important to also observe it from afar. You don't need that selfie with a seal! And, parents, you don't need to record your child chasing ducks - especially in nesting season (as I saw in the park recently). It's amazing what you'll see when creatures feel safe enough to carry out their day to day life.



And, please pick up your dog's poo. Even if you are in a field, it is crucial. Ensure you dispose of it properly, even if the poo bin stinks! Look at my face in the photo to the left, haha! We spot too many bags hung in trees and left at gate posts. I can't understand why anyone would do that.





1 THINK BUDGET

Depending on budget, you may choose to build a pond in a bucket, in a pre-fab container or using a pond liner. Whatever you choose, it will help the wildlife in your garden.

2 PICK YOUR PATCH

If possible, choose sunny a spot that isn't too near a tree, you don't want leaves falling into the pond. However, low bushes around a pond will be a great habitat for wildlife.

3 DECIDE ON DEPTH

To attract amphibians, you will need a 60cm deep section. The pond should also have shallow parts for planting and safe access in and out for mammals and birds.

4 DIG TIME

Mark out the space you want to make the pond and dig accordingly. If you are using pond liner, take out as many stones as possible and line the area with sand or old carpet.

5 LEVEL IT UP

Ensure the area you have dug is level and put your container in or line the area with the pond liner. For a natural feel, add sticks and rocks.

6 FINISH AND FILL

If possible, fill the pond with rainwater. If you have any plants, now is the time to add them. Native oxygenating plants help keep the pond clear.



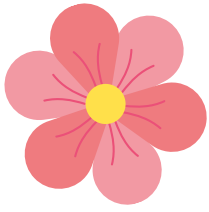
[YOU CAN WATCH MY YOUTUBE TUTORIAL ON HOW TO BUILD A POND HERE.](#)

Spot The Difference

Can you spot all 5 differences?

It's a tricky one this time!





A COMMUNITY BUZZ

An interview with Carole from The Hive of Sedgfield, a Community Interest Centre (CIC) in the UK.



What inspired you to create The Hive, a Community Interest Centre (CIC)?

A Community Interest Company means we can ensure that the community benefit from everything we do. It's exciting and fun!



What is the best part of running The Hive?

The volunteers are amazing and make a difference in how we can help people. We have made friends, shared ideas and met wonderful people like you, that we wouldn't have met any other way. That's definitely the best part of running The Hive.



Where did the idea of a community garden come from?

I have always loved growing vegetables and flowers. It helped me relax when I had a busy legal career. Then when I was made disabled and my legal career ended, I knew that was the way forward for me, and so we made an accessible garden to share with other people. Sharing something is more fun than doing it by ourselves.



Why is it so important to have British cut flowers in the shop?

British flowers are really important to us. We grow them because it's better for our planet. They're beautiful, they have fragrance, they last a long time in the vase and we don't use any chemicals to grow them. No air miles either because we pick them and they are made into bouquets and then into the shop. Flying flowers all around the world is not good for our planet.



A big part of the shop is dedicated to recycling. Why is it so important to recycle?

We love recycling. It's much better to reuse materials that we already have, than keep replacing them, especially with plastic. It keeps all those things out of the huge landfill sites. If all families could reuse, repair and recycle things, it would make a real difference to our planet. We can't make huge changes on our own, but if we can all do our part, collectively we are very powerful. Children are the best people to do that now, so as they grow up, they keep those good habits and teach their children.

PHOTO'S COPYRIGHT OF THE HIVE



Donate: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/the-hive-of-sedgfield>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Thehiveofsedgfield/>

! Litter Emergency !

♻️ There are many ways to help our communities and the environment, including getting out into the fresh air and picking up litter. Litter is a massive problem in the UK.



I had written a whole piece on why we should pick up litter, but then we saw a passionate post by Pauly from Hedgehog Cabin, and I would like to share that with you instead,

"It doesn't matter who dropped the litter; you tutting will not help the animal, which later gets trapped and dies. How much effort would you put into saving a trapped animal? It takes so much less to prevent it".

In other words, please pick it up! I would love to encourage you all to do a '5-minute sweep a week' around your street or park and see how much litter you could find. You'll prevent it from blowing into our waterways and affecting our wildlife, like in the poor hedgehogs' photographs.

Please send your photos to envirokiduk@gmail.com #5minutesweepaweek

Photo credit: Hedgehog Cabin.

<https://hedgehogcabin.info/>

<https://hedgehogcabin.info/donations>

**CAN YOU DRAW THE FROG'S FACE?
AND, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FROG IS
SAYING?**



**Forward your completed picture, or send any other
artwork to: envirokiduk@gmail.com
and I'll display them on my website**



A Walk in the Woods

If you don't have access to a garden, then parks and nature reserves are an excellent way to experience nature.

Visits to woodlands support our mental health. It is estimated that walks in woodlands save the NHS a whopping £185 million in treatment costs annually. That's incredible, isn't it?

One statistic that blew my mind was finding out that patients who can see a tree from their hospital rooms are said to need less pain medication.

Trees are calming. They reduce our heart rate and our stress levels. They are home to many bird species, and the 2012 European Quality of Life Survey found that the more bird species that live nearby us, the happier we are!

Sources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mental-health-benefits-of-visiting-uk-woodlands-estimated-at-185-million>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/12/201204110246.htm>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/thriving-with-nature/guide>

<https://positivepsychology.com/positive-effects-of-nature/>

You don't actually have to visit a green space to get benefits from nature. Just looking at nature can alleviate stress. That includes just staring at a photograph.

Looking at the soft shapes in nature (such as clouds), the soft shapes and gentle movement can promote well-being.

So if you are unable to get out and about on the next page, why don't you visit Stewchats amazing blog, which has an abundance of amazing photographs (including loads of photographs of some beautiful moths). <http://boulmerbirder.blogspot.com/>

WORD SEARCH!

s	c	r	s	p	i	d	e	r	d	q
u	w	f	r	o	g	e	b	i	o	t
g	b	g	p	n	l	q	k	r	g	b
t	k	b	x	d	j	p	c	f	p	a
e	z	l	m	e	q	r	o	p	k	d
f	h	q	w	e	y	z	j	e	u	g
c	d	s	t	b	a	t	t	l	h	e
s	p	k	f	d	a	d	d	e	f	r
x	r	v	a	u	e	p	o	r	z	y
p	o	i	r	a	f	g	s	w	a	n
n	e	c	t	a	r	p	d	r	l	a

bee

meadow

swan

bat

frog

spider

badger

pond

nectar

Can you find all 9 words?

For this activity, you will need to download and print this page.

#envirokid

USEFUL LINKS and RESOURCES

How to make a hedgehog highway: <https://youtu.be/zRQVn2g-Clk>

Wildlife Blogger Stewchat: <http://boulmerbirder.blogspot.com/>

Wild Your Garden with Joel Ashton: <https://youtu.be/GWQsOoePD08>

Bumblebee Conservation Trust: <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/>

British Dragonfly Society: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/about/our-work/>

RSPB Fun and Learning: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/>

Wildlife Trusts Help Wildlife at Home: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions>

RHS Campaign for School Gardening: <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home>

Woodland Trusts Big Climate Fight Back:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/big-climate-fightback/>

Seeds:

1. <https://seedball.co.uk/>
2. <https://higgledygarden.com/>
3. <https://meadowinmygarden.co.uk/>

The School Seed Bank: Twitter @TheSchoolSeedB1 and <https://t.co/hMIQcyjabr>

We would like to thank everyone involved in producing this resource including:

Green Fingered George, Stewchat, Brigit Strawbridge Howard, Carole from The Hive Sedgefield CIC, Hedgehog Cabin and Richard Dowling

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