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HOW TO GUIDE

Beds For Bees

This document contains all you need to know to make a Bee Bed a success and will guide you through the process step by step.



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· INITIAL STEPS ·

Choosing your site

Most plants will do best in an open sunny site with good drainage, preferably free of invasive, vigorous vegetation. However, we can also provide planting designs for shadier areas. Beds cut out of short, managed turf are ideal, for example in a local park, or school grounds, or existing flowerbeds that need a refresh. You will also need to decide the dimensions and shape of the bed.

We require that the bed is **no less than 5m², and no more than 10m²**.

Community consultation

The first thing to do is to make sure that your local community is onboard with the idea particularly those residents who live nearest to the proposed site. Whichever communication process you choose for this, it is important to explain what you are planning and why. Sharing the photographs and planting designs, which we will provide, can help get people interested, and the process may help you to gather some extra volunteers for the project.

Permission

Once it has been established that the proposal has community backing, the next step is to seek written permission from the landowner. This may be your local authority; in which case it might be useful to speak to your Council Biodiversity Officer or Countryside Ranger to find out who you should approach. Find out if your council has a pollinator strategy, and/or a biodiversity action plan (BAP). If so, the Beds for Bees scheme will help fulfil that remit and should therefore encourage local authority support.



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· CREATING THE BED FOR BEES ·

Preparation of the bed

If you are establishing a new bed in existing grassland you will need to measure and mark out the bed, remove the turf, dig over the soil incorporating some peat-free compost, and rake to a fine tilth. If it is an existing bed, it will simply need to be weeded, dug over and raked out, again with peat-free compost added. If you do not have enough willing and able volunteers for this, it may be possible to ask for help from your local Criminal Justice Service. In some areas this service is called Community Payback, or Unpaid Volunteers. Your local authority should be able to help you access this service. It is advisable to begin to organise this several months before planting time, although ideally the actual prep of the bed would not be done until mid to late May, just before planting.

One thing to think about is what to do with the turf that is being taken out. It can be costly to dispose of at landfill in some areas, however, it is a valuable resource. If it can be inverted and stacked in a discreet corner or under hedgerows/at the base of a tree somewhere in the surrounding area, it will offer habitat for wild bees who will find the loose structure of the soil attractive as a nesting site. It is important to check that the landowner is happy with this arrangement.

Planting plans

RePollinate will supply a selection of planting designs which can be tailored to community group preferences, and the orientation and conditions of the site. We would plan to meet with you via Zoom to talk



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this through. It would be useful to have photographs of the site available at this meeting and a clear idea of the orientation of the proposed bed, the wetness of the site (from summer through to winter) and the soil type, if possible, i.e., light loam, sandy, heavy clay.

All plants selected for Beds for Bees offer a high nectar value and collectively a variety of flower types to appeal to as wide a range of pollinators as possible. The designs incorporate sequential flowering from early in the season (to support early emerging queen bees) right up until the first frosts. The plants are sourced from reputable and reliable nurseries and, where possible, will be supplied peat and chemical free. Not all of the plants we use are native but, where possible, we have chosen plants that are close relatives of our native species.

Designated plant receiver

Once the design has been agreed we will order your plants and arrange for them to be sent to whoever you have elected as your designated plant receiver. We will endeavour to have the plants sent as near to planting time as possible (late May/ early June), but it should be noted that this is not always possible, and your designated receiver may need to look after the plants for a few weeks, keeping them watered and protected from frosts if necessary. Some may need potting on if they arrive early. On the plus side, if you love plants it will feel like your birthday every time a delivery arrives (sorry, but you will have to part with them at planting time)!

Planting time

The right planting time very much depends on what is happening with the weather. However, early June is usually late enough to avoid any frosts which could damage the plants.



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We would provide you with a detailed plan to follow when planting, however there is no obligation for you to follow it to the letter as long as all the plants are planted.

If plants are to establish successfully, they will need to be well watered in after planting, and in the following weeks if it is dry.

We will provide you with a sign to erect at the site. The sign will explain the purpose of the bed and incorporate a QR code which will lead users to the RePollinate website where more information can be found.

Maintenance

The beds are designed to be low maintenance and the density of planting should help keep weeds to a minimum. However, the beds may require a little light weeding at points in the growing season. Deadheading will prolong flowering and watering will be important if the weather is very dry, particularly in the early weeks while the plants establish.

The following spring after establishment, some plants may need cutting back and all plants will benefit from an additional dressing of compost at their bases. Fresh annuals can be planted with compost in any gaps after the risk of frost has passed, though it may be that the perennial plants have bulked up enough over one season and annuals are not required.

After 3 to 5 years, some plants may need lifting and dividing. We can provide guidance on this if required. Lifting and dividing will prevent plants from becoming congested and will help to keep them at their best. An added advantage is that you will have a whole lot of new plants to create another bee bed with, or give away to members of your community, so their gardens can provide a haven for pollinators too.



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· AGREEMENT ·

RePollinate would:

- provide a planting plan, after consultation with the community group, ensuring that each design delivers on variety in flower morphology for different pollinator groups, harmonious/attractive colour arrangements, variety in height structure, extended/sequential flowering, and low maintenance.
- supply the plants, organising for them to be sent to the community group's designated receiver as near to planting time as possible.
- cover the cost of peat free compost for the first year (if required).
- provide a sign for the site explaining the purpose of the bed and including a QR code which would lead to the RePollinate website where more information will be available.
- provide guidance for the ongoing maintenance of the beds.

The community group would:

- identify a suitable site, consult with local residents, and contact the landowner to obtain permission for the establishment of the bed.
- organise the preparation of the bed, including digging it out if necessary, removing any pre-existing vegetation.
- Source the peat-free compost locally and incorporate it in to the bed, as required.
- designate a member of the group to receive the plants and look after them until planting time.
- plant out the bed at the agreed time (usually late May/ early June).
- have enough active volunteers willingly to commit to weekly maintenance sessions of the bed, as required (we recommend three to five volunteers).
- agree to maintain the bed for a minimum of a five-year period.
- appoint at least one designated recorder to take photos/videos of the site at roughly the same time each month and send on to RePollinate. These would be used to promote the project. It would be good to include members of the community group (as long as everybody gives permission for the photos to be used by RePollinate).

