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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. New beds can be cut out of short, managed grass, for example in a local park, or you can use existing flowerbeds or raised beds that need a refresh. If you are creating a new bed by cutting an area out of grass, it is advisable to edge the bed in some way. If this is not possible, create a shallow trench along your freshly cut edge, mounding the soil up towards your flower bed.

You will also need to decide the dimensions and shape of the bed, however, we require that the bed comprises **one continuous planting space of 10m²** (i.e. 1m x 10m, 2m x 5m, 4m x 2.5 or 3.6m diameter circle).

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.

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 fulfill 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, edge the bed and/or dig a shallow trench (mounding the soil into the bed) and rake the soil 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 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

In the first instance, RePollinate will meet with members of your group via Zoom to talk through your site, the conditions, and any community group preferences regarding the planting. We will then send you a Bee Bed design checklist for you to fill out. This will require the following information:



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- a clear idea of the location of the proposed bed (with Latitude/Longitude or a Google Maps pin)
- the wetness of the site (from summer through to winter)
- the soil type i.e. light loam, sandy, heavy clay, with a video of some soil being dug from the planting site
- two or three photographs clearly showing the planting site and surrounding areas

Giving us a clear and detailed idea of the environmental conditions of your Bee Bed will help us choose plants which will thrive in that location.

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 emerging queen bumblebees, for example) right up until the first frosts (to support foraging butterflies before they hibernate for winter, for example). The plants are sourced from reputable and reliable nurseries and, where possible, will be supplied peat and chemical free. Depending on what aesthetic preferences you specify in your Bee Bed design checklist, there may be some native wildflowers supplied as plugs (small plants) included in the design. This combination of cultivated and native perennial plants is a novel approach and will offer the best of both worlds for people and pollinators alike.

Designated plant receiver

It is important that we have one point of contact for plant delivery. Once the design has been agreed, the plants will be ordered, and arrangements will be made for them to be sent to your designated plant receiver.



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Please note plants may be delivered outside standard business hours, so please only give a delivery address if there will be somebody there to receive the plants, or they can be left in a safe place for a short amount of time. It is also important that the address supplied is easy to find to avoid plant deliveries being retained by confused couriers.

We will aim to have the plants sent as near to planting time as possible, 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 late frosts if necessary. Please note the plants will come from several different nurseries and deliveries will not typically be heavy or excessively bulky (individual plant parcels are no more than 12kg and can easily fit in a car boot if needed).

Planting time

The right planting time very much depends on what is happening with the weather and where you are in the UK. You should aim to plant up the bed as soon after the plants arrive as possible, although it is best to avoid planting wildflower plugs in hot, dry weather. We will provide you with a detailed plan to follow when planting.

If plants are to establish successfully, they will need to be thoroughly watered-in after planting, and in the following weeks/months if the weather is dry. It is important to give newly planted plants a thorough drenching when watering. Shallow watering will encourage shallow root systems and make the plants less resilient to drought in the long term.

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.



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Maintenance

The beds are designed to be low maintenance and the density of planting should help keep weeds to a minimum. However, the beds will require some 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 and months 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.

After 3 years, some plants will need lifting and dividing. 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.

We will provide you with a comprehensive and easy-to-follow maintenance plan for your Bee Bed.



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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.
- incorporate the peat-free compost into the bed, as required (please let us know well in advance if you require us to source the compost for you)
- designate a member of the group to take delivery of 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 as a minimum).
- 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. This will help us to monitor progress of the plants and offer any advice to support the successful establishment of your Bee Bed. Photos/videos will also be used to promote the project and share with our funders. Ideally photos would include members of the community group (as long as everybody gives permission for the material to be used by RePollinate).
- Erect the sign on site (the community group will be responsible for providing the fixings).
- If for any reason your group cannot maintain the bed after the five year period ends, we ask you to find a caring home in your local community for the plants to move on to.

