

Session Three

Last session we got to know more about Wildlife, identifying different types and learning about where they live. This week we are going to look in more depth at:

Wild Flowers & Plants

Location: Garden or Playing Field, Park or Glen, Coast or Plantation

What you need:

- Print the booklet OR use some scrap paper and copy out our activities
- ID app
- Camera and/or colouring pencils
- An adult to help with some of the ranger work, especially if you are going to do any of the activities with boiling water!
- Equipment for Ranger Work (see instructions on activities)

Aims:

- Understand the importance of Plants & Wild Flowers
- Be able to identify some common Wild Flowers & Plants

What we will cover:

- Wild Flowers
- Plants

Ranger Work:

- Grow you own Wild Flower patch
- Natural Dye T-shirt
- Perfume Production
- Nettle String Making

Wild Flowers

From the dazzling bluebells that blanket the ground in our glens in the spring, to the hillsides bright with gorse and heather in the summer, plants and wild flowers make our island look even more beautiful, while providing precious nectar and other food sources, as well as habitats, for our wee beasties.

Why are wild flowers important for us?



We need a wide range of wild flowers to provide pollinators, such as bees, with food across the seasons so that they have healthy populations and can pollinate our fruit, vegetable and nut crops. Wild plants and flowers (or Producers) form the foundations of food chains. Without them, many creatures wouldn't have habitats or food.



Wildflowers play an important role in scientific and medical research. For example, although poisonous in its flower form, Foxgloves contain chemicals used to treat heart conditions.



We also benefit from the therapeutic value of flowers; fragrant and beautiful, they provide us with ever changing environments to enjoy, enhancing our wellbeing.



Grow your own wild flower patch

Why not leave a small patch in your garden to go wild? Leave a patch of grass uncut and see what appears. Or get a packet of wild flower seeds from your local garden centre and plant them in a flowerbed, window box, or a large pot. We left a patch of our lawn uncut and here's what came up – Dandelions, Primroses, Daisies, Creeping Buttercups, Germander Speedwell and Red Campion. We used the "Seek" App to identify them.

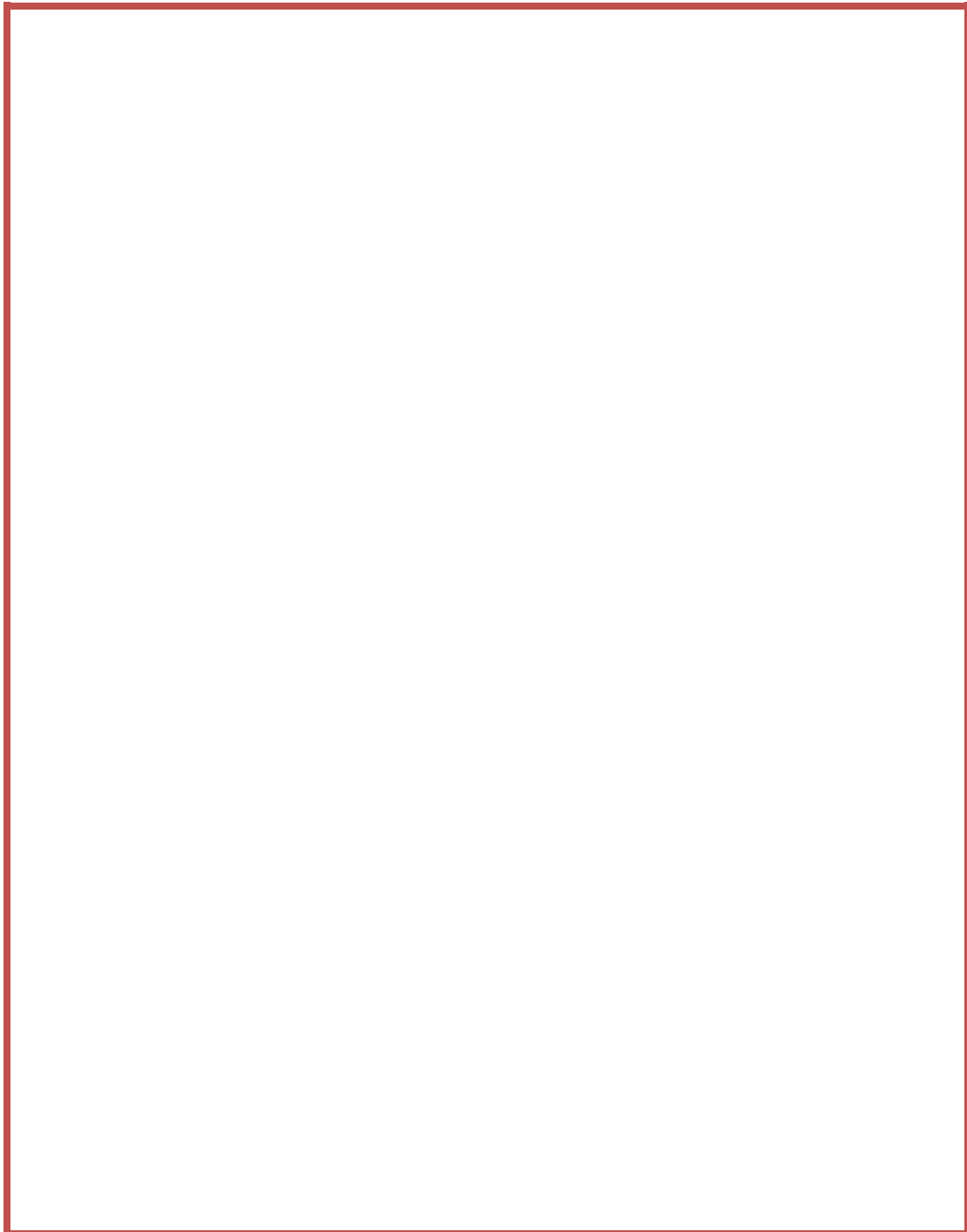
See what flowers you can find in your local area.



You can use a free app like "Seek" by iNaturalist, or "Picture This: Identify Plant, Flower, Weed and More".



Draw your favorite flower in the box below.



Plants



Plants, flowers and hedgerows provide shade and shelter for smaller plants and animals, creating habitats and food for beetles, bugs and other wee beasties.

They can also be really helpful to keep soil healthy. When plants become

established and spread their roots, they stabilise the surrounding soil. This means that when there is a lot of rainfall, or irrigation in fields used to grow crops, soil particles and nutrients stored in the ground stick around and the soil stays healthy. This is especially important on hillsides, where sloping ground is easily washed away if there aren't root systems to hold the soil in place. Without plants that

stabilise the soil, nutrients can get washed away into nearby water systems. This causes a problem called 'eutrophication', where algae spread and can make the water toxic to marine animals.



As well as being very important in ecosystems, flowers and plants have lots of uses. Here are just a few ways we can utilise them. Why not have a go at one or two of these yourself. Some bits might be tricky or hot, so get an adult to help!

Natural dye t-shirt – Adult supervision needed!



- Pick Gorse flowers, being careful not to get prickled. You might want to wear some thick gloves! The more petals you pick the better the colour will be, so get lots.
- Place the flowers and about 3 liters of water in a large pan and bring to a rolling boil for about 5 minutes.
- Take the pan off the heat and put your cotton t-shirt in, make sure it is covered by the water. If your pan isn't big enough you can transfer the hot water and petals to a large bucket so you can fit your T-shirt in too.
- Give it a stir every so often and then leave to soak overnight.
- In the morning take the t-shirt out of the pan, give it a good squeeze out and hand wash it with mild detergent in cool water.
- Line or air dry and wear! Beware, colour may transfer in subsequent washes!

Home-made perfume – Adult supervision needed!

- Pick the petals from the flower you want to make perfume from. Great options are wild roses or honeysuckle, but any that smell nice will work.
- Put some cheesecloth inside an empty bowl, with the edges hanging out, and place your petals on top of the cloth.
- Pour a small amount of water on top of your petals to cover them. Ensure the edges of the cheesecloth are still hanging out of the bowl and cover the bowl with a lid.
- Leave the petals to soak overnight.





- The next day, remove the lid and gently bring the four corners of the cheesecloth together, lifting the pouch out of the bowl with the petals and water still inside the pouch.
- Squeeze the cheesecloth gently over a small saucepan extracting the flower-scented water.
- Simmer the water over a low heat until you have around 1 teaspoon of liquid.
- Allow the liquid to cool then bottle up your perfume. The perfume made from petals generally last about a month if stored in a cool and dark place.

Nettle String

We've had a go at this one and are using the string to tie our tomato plants and sunflowers to supports in the garden. What will you use yours for?



Take some pictures and let us know how you get on. Be safe and have fun!

Next week we'll be learning more about:
Ecosystems