

SUSTAINABLE WHADDON

- Opportunities to enhance ecology and biodiversity
- Opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint

A Wilder Look at Lawns

The closely cut ‘English lawn’ was created in the 17th century and was a symbol of aristocracy or the upper classes. This must have been hugely labour intensive, especially as the lawnmower wasn’t invented until 1830, inspired by a machine for cutting cloth. Times are changing, and maybe a new image of the traditional lawn is needed.

Most people in Whaddon have some lawn and, walking round the village in the spring, I was encouraged to see how many had carefully mown around patches of cowslips or buttercups. There is a wonderful lawn in Dyers Green full of snake’s head fritillaries in April, and another villager was telling me how bee orchids had appeared in his lawn when he left an area unmown. These are all native species which grow in the wild in this part of England, along with daisies, dandelions, clover, bird’s foot trefoil, germander speedwell, herb robert and many other species. Are these weeds or wild flowers? It’s just a matter of perspective – embrace them all and there won’t be a weed in sight!



For those with larger lawns, using a varied cutting regime in different areas will allow wild flowers to grow, flower and seed. Keep some areas short as pathways and hunting grounds for worm-eating birds. Let the rest grow a little longer, mowing some of it every 3-4 weeks so allowing flowers to bloom and attract bees. Let some grass stay long all summer as this is beneficial for caterpillars, grasshoppers and other insects, increases the number of ‘good bugs’ and helps avoid the need to use chemicals. I know it will appear a bit unkempt by this stage, making the move away from a traditional lawn all the more challenging, but think of the benefits to wildlife. Also, longer grass has deeper roots making it more resilient to dry weather and less likely to turn

brown. It won't come as a surprise that artificial grass is disastrous for wildlife and the environment, but fortunately plastic lawns are currently few and far between in Whaddon.

Whaddon Seed Exchange Update

We're pleased to report that the Parish Council approved our request to house a seed exchange within the Meldreth road telephone box. The purpose of this is to enable gardeners to easily swap vegetable and flower seeds, including those collected from their own gardens and any spare commercial seed, thus enabling more sustainable gardening and hopefully providing villagers with interesting seed to grow. Shelves have been installed in the phone box and small boxes arranged in alphabetical order will be available to store seed envelopes. A successful exchange relies on seed donations, so please start to harvest garden seeds and dig-out any unwanted commercial seed packets. Harvested seeds should be



separated from the surrounding tissue or pulp and air dried for several days. Once dry they should be placed in a paper bag or envelope, labelled with the plant name (and optionally any description or growing tips) and deposited in the seed exchange. Currently the collection includes flowers such as *Tragopogon porrifolius* (purple salsify), *Cerinth major* 'purpurascens' (honeywort), *Aquilegia* (grannys bonnet), *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Salvia patens*, *Papaver somniferum* (poppy) and vegetables such as broad bean, runner bean and French climbing bean. Please start collecting; your donations will be much appreciated.

Sustainable Whaddon at the Village Fete

The Sustainable Whaddon stall at the village fete hosted a lot of visitors to discuss our ideas and activities to enhance the ecology and biodiversity of our village and reduce our carbon footprint. We also ran a wildflower quiz, gave out free squash plants, had bug hunt Fortune Teller sheets for children and demonstrated a couple of bug hotels that could be readily made at home. Importantly we asked villagers to write down their own thoughts for sustainable living and we received a number of interesting ideas that we can follow up in the future. Thanks to everyone who attended our stall.

Jenny Grech and Chris Selway

The next meeting of Sustainable Whaddon is on Wednesday 23rd October and anyone is welcome to attend. You can get in touch with the group at sustainablewhaddon@whaddon.org