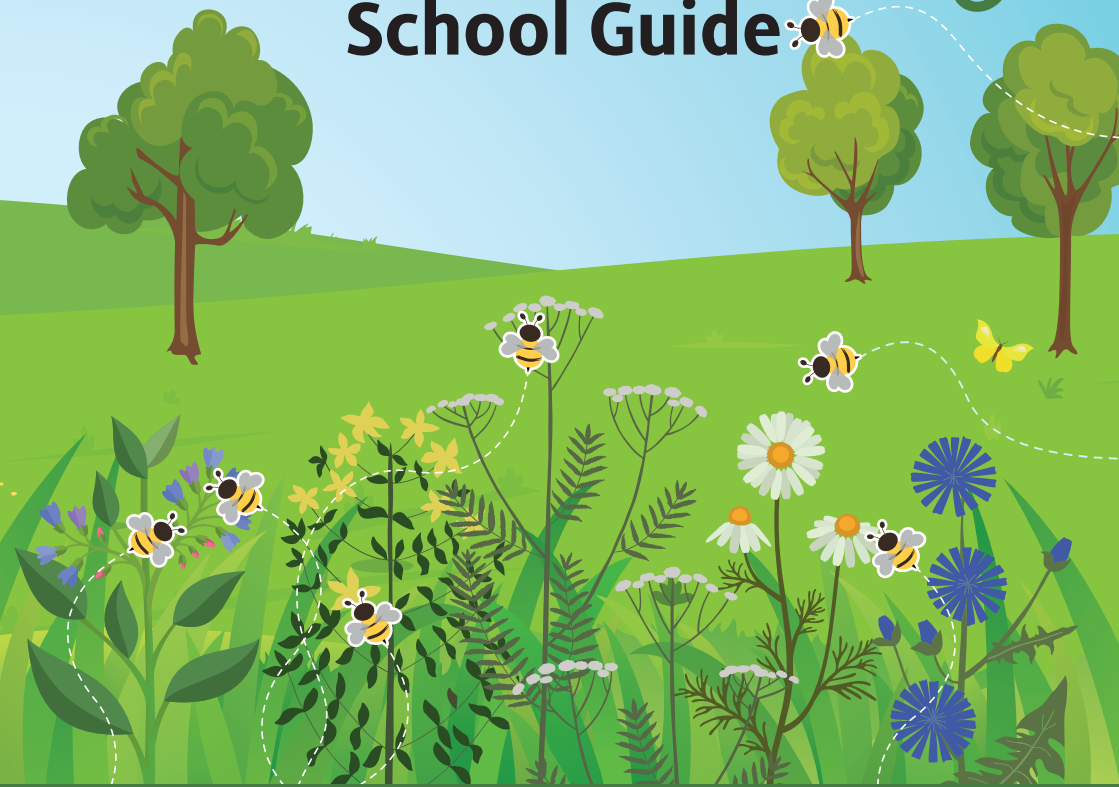




Bee Friendly



School Guide



Introduction

Creating a bee-friendly school is one of the most rewarding ways to help children connect with nature while supporting the UK's struggling bumblebee populations.

This guide will help your school create vibrant, wildlife-rich spaces by offering practical ideas on what to plant, how to support bumblebees throughout the year, and what other insects and wildlife your new habitats are likely to attract.



By following this guide, your school will:

- ✓ Support local biodiversity and pollinator health
- ✓ Provide hands-on learning opportunities linked to science, geography, art, and wellbeing
- ✓ Empower pupils to take environmental action
- ✓ Create colourful, engaging outdoor spaces for everyone to enjoy

Your bee-friendly areas won't just help bumblebees - they will also attract butterflies, hoverflies, ladybirds, beetles, and even small birds and amphibians, creating a thriving mini-ecosystem right on your school grounds.



Why Bumblebees need our help

Bumblebees are essential pollinators, responsible for helping many of our fruits, vegetables, and wildflowers reproduce. However, they face challenges such as habitat loss, reduced flower availability, pesticides, and climate change. Schools can play a powerful role in reversing this trend by creating small but meaningful pockets of habitat.

What makes a Bee Friendly School?

A Bee Friendly School provides the three things bumblebees need most:

- ✔ **Food** - a wide range of nectar- and pollen-rich flowers from early spring to late autumn
- ✔ **Shelter** - safe nesting and overwintering spots
- ✔ **Safety** - reduced pesticide use and increased awareness of pollinator-friendly practices

This guide breaks down each of these areas into simple, achievable actions



1 Creating bee-friendly planting areas

Choosing the right plants

Aim for a mix of flowers that bloom across the seasons. Prioritise:

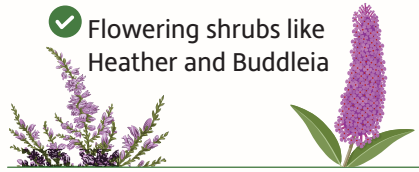
- ✓ Native wildflowers



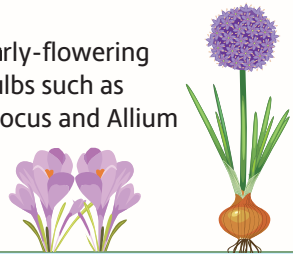
- ✓ Herbs such as Lavender, Rosemary, and Thyme



- ✓ Flowering shrubs like Heather and Buddleia



- ✓ Early-flowering bulbs such as Crocus and Allium



Planting tips

- ✓ Use sunny areas where possible
- ✓ Plant in clusters to help bees forage efficiently
- ! Avoid double-flowered varieties, which often lack accessible nectar

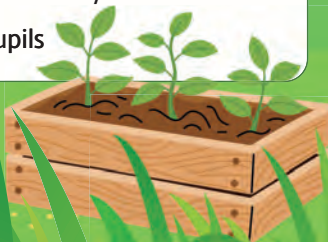


Easy projects for schools

- ✓ Wildflower patches
- ✓ Pollinator borders along fences or paths
- ✓ Hanging baskets with bee-friendly annuals
- ✓ Herb planters made by pupils











Remember there is absolutely no shame in buying plug plants... make it easy for yourself!








Below is a simple, user-friendly guide to what you can plant.







Good things to plant...

Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Rosemary 	Supermarket veg aisle / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail, Solitary bees	Mediterranean plant; likes dry, sandy soil; slow grower; purple/white flowers; overwinters well.
Lavender 	Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail	Same needs as rosemary; slow growing; purple/white varieties; overwinters.
Thyme 	Supermarket veg aisle / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary bees	Great ground cover; slow grower; trails nicely; many varieties; low-growing; overwinters.
Oregano 	Supermarket veg aisle / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary bees	Likes dry soil; grows vigorously when happy; perennial.
Borage 	Garden centre / Easy from seed	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Early bees, Solitary bees	Fast from seed; blue/white flowers; refills nectar every 2 minutes; self-seeds heavily; good for poor/shady soil.
Fennel 	Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary wasps, Solitary bees, Yellowfaced bee	Very tall (5ft+); attracts many insects; green/bronze varieties; perennial.
Comfrey 	Garden centre / Neighbours	Hairyfooted flower bee, Common carder, Buff tail, White tail, Early bees	Can spread; broad leaves; good for fertiliser; purple/ white flowers; thrives in shade/poor soil.
Chives 	Supermarket veg aisle / Garden centre	Red tail, Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary bees	Cheap; divide clumps; cut back after flowering for a second bloom.






Food plants

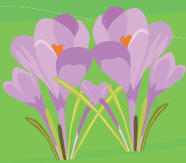
Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Strawberry 	Garden centre / Neighbours	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary bees, Yellowfaced bee	Ground cover; fruit loved by birds/slugs; trails well.
Parsnip 	Grow from seed	Solitary wasps, Solitary bees	Root year 1, flowers year 2; grows 6ft+; excellent for wildlife.
Raspberry 	Garden centre / Neighbours	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Solitary bees	Thorny; good for birds; yellow varieties available; perennial.
Tomato 	Garden centre / Seed	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail	Needs deep soil & regular watering.
Brassicas 	Garden centre / Seed	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail, Solitary bees	Grow for flowers; cabbage whites will visit (good food for wasps & birds).

Trees and shrubs

Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Willow 	Garden centre / Cuttings	Many bee species	Loves wet soil; early food source.
Cherry 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Fruiting varieties best, avoid decorative double/triple decorative varieties (double/triple bloom).
Quince 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Spiky; good near fences; good for birds.
Almond 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Don't plant near cherries; squirrels steal nuts; lovely blossom.

Bulbs

Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Crocus 	Supermarket / Garden centre	Many bee species including early bees	Spring or autumn flowering; plant in clumps; great in grass; returns yearly.
Daffodil 	Supermarket / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail, Hairyfooted flower bee	Choose wild types; avoid double blooms; full sun; perennial.
Muscari 	Supermarket / Garden centre	Common carder, Hairyfooted flower bee, Early bees	Blue/white types; great with daffs; perennial; good in pots.
Gladioli 	Supermarket / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail	Tall; avoid double varieties; perennial but may flop.
Allium 	Supermarket / Garden centre	Buff tail, White tail, Tree, Red tail	Expensive but excellent for bees; huge flower heads; dry well for crafts.



Flowers


Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Heather (winter) 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Hardy; slow grower; avoid spray painted ones.
Pulmonaria 	Garden centre	Hairyfooted flower bee, Early bees	Perennial, flowers in Feb; spotted leaves; trumpet flowers; excellent early food.
Calendula 	Garden centre / Seed	Many bee species	Choose single flowers; deadhead for more blooms; edible petals.
Tree Mallow 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Tall; purple flowers; may overwinter.
Common Mallow 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Pink flowers; tall and bushy.
Primrose/Cowslip/Oxslip 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Great winter flowers; good in shade; perennial.
Hollyhock 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Choose single flowers; very tall. They self seed, so will come back year after year.
Snapdragon 	Garden centre	Common carder, Tree bees	Fun for kids; many colours.
Cornflower 	Garden centre / Seed	Many bee species	Tolerates poor soil; tall & colourful; edible petals.
Linaria 	Garden centre	Common carder	Tall, yellow or purple flowers; perennial. Should come back year after year.







Flowers (continued)

Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Oxeye Daisy 	Garden centre / Neighbours	Many bee species	Forms dense clumps; easy to divide; longlasting.
Foxglove 	Garden centre / Seed	Garden bees	Prefers shade; TOXIC if eaten. Leaves in first year, flowers in second year.
Lupin 	Garden centre	Garden bees	Perennial, big, bushy; needs space; fun to watch bees wiggle inside.
Lamb's Ear 	Garden centre	Wool carder bee	Perennial, will spread. Soft leaves used for nest building; good ground cover.
Michaelmas Daisy 	Garden centre	Many insects	Perennial herbaceous plant of the genus Aster species; Flowers for ages; great trailing over edges.
Globe Thistle 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Tall, spiky; blue ball flowers; dry well.
Sea Holly 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Tall, spiky; blue/white varieties; good dried.
Cirsium 	Garden centre	Many bee species	Decorative thistle; tall & spiky; good for birds.
Nepeta (catmint) 	Garden centre / Neighbours	Many bee species	Perennial, spreads well; purple flowers; smells lovely.
Poppy 	Garden centre / Seed	Many bee species	Needs disturbed soil; choose single flowers; great with cornflower & calendula.


Weeds (actually great for wildlife)

Plant	Where to Get	Good For	Notes
Red Dead Nettle 	Neighbours / Verges	Common carder, Hairyfooted flower bee, Early bees	Already common; low-growing; great ground cover; doesn't sting.
White Dead Nettle 	Neighbours / Verges	Same as above	Taller; likes hedgerows; Also doesn't sting.
Aquilegia 	Neighbours / Garden centre / Seed	Many bee species	Easy from seed; collect and scatter yearly.
Dandelion 	Collect seeds	Red tail, Solitary bees, Yellowfaced bee	Vital early food; leave wild strips. Seed heads great for birds.
Bramble 	Stem cuttings	Many bee species	Thorny; great for birds; good in managed patches.
Buttercup 	Neighbours	Solitary bees	Common in grass; leave wild
Yarrow 	Neighbours / Verges	Solitary bees	Feathery leaves; flat flowers; not a weed.
Ivy 	Replant with root	Ivy bee, Solitary wasps, Solitary	Don't cut in Autumn - ivy bees rely on it; berries feed birds.
Thistle 	Neighbours	Many bee species	Spiky; tall; great for bumblebees and birds.
Clover 	Neighbours / Verges	Many bee species	Red & white types; thrives where trampled.
Teasel 	Garden centre / Seed	Bees & wasps	Very tall & spiky; self-seeds; great for birds.

Bad things to plant...

Group	Plant	Good For	Bad For	Notes
Bedding plants 	Geranium, Begonia, Viola	Looking pretty	Wildlife	Bred to not have pollen or nectar.
Mint family 	Mint, Lemon balm	Sensory play, edible	Takes over	Only grow in a pot with rim above soil.
Marigold (Tagetes) 	Tagetes	Looks pretty	Wildlife	"French marigold".
Double/triple flowers 	e.g., cherry, hollyhock, calendula, poppy	Looks pretty	All insects	Bugs can't reach the nectar - avoid.

Plants to be cautious of...

Parsnip	Sap can be a harmful irritant. Grow where kids aren't going to touch.
Comfrey	Has little hairs that can be an irritant.
Borage	Hairs can be an irritant.
Teasel	Very spiky - great for birds.
Foxglove	 Toxic if ingested.

Other wildlife you may attract

Creating a space that welcomes bees also attracts lots of other wonderful wildlife.

Your planting areas may also support:



Butterflies - drawn to nectar-rich flowers



Hoverflies - excellent pollinators and natural pest controllers



Ladybirds - help manage aphids



Birds - attracted by seeds, insects and shelter

Most insects are harmless and only sting when they feel threatened - waving your arms around is the quickest way to annoy them, so staying calm is always best.

Below is a simple, user-friendly guide to the creatures you might see, with links to help you identify them.

Bees



Bumblebees

Many species visit gardens and parks.



Solitary Bees

A huge variety, often small and gentle.



Honey Bees

Social bees that live in hives.

Wasps



Common Wasp

Often misunderstood but important pollinators.



Solitary Wasps

Usually non-aggressive and great for pest control.

Examples: Ectemnius, Bee wolf and others.

Hornets



Common Hornet

Larger but generally calm unless disturbed.



Yellow-legged (Asian) Hornet

Non-native species - must be reported to Defra.

Ladybirds



Native Ladybirds

Bright, spotted, and brilliant for gardens.



Harlequin Ladybird (non-native)

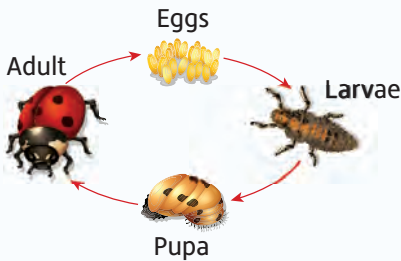
Now common in the UK.



Ladybird Larvae

Look a bit alien but eat huge numbers of aphids!

Ladybird lifecycle



Beetles



General Beetles

Many species help keep ecosystems healthy.



Violet Ground Beetle

Shiny, dark, and often seen at night.



Thick-thighed Flower Beetle

Metallic green with distinctive back legs.



Longhorn Beetles

Long antennae and striking patterns.

Spiders



Flower Crab Spider

Often found on flowers, waiting to ambush prey.

The Flower Crab Spider hunts by camouflaging on flowers, matching its body color to its surroundings to catch prey.

Amphibians



Frogs

Often found near ponds or damp areas.



Toads

Prefer drier habitats but still love gardens.



Newts

Three UK species - all protected.

Birds

You may spot a variety of garden birds enjoying insects, seeds, and shelter, including:



Robin



Blackbird



Wren



Dunnock



Sparrow



Goldfinch



Pigeon

Butterflies

Your bee area can attract many colourful butterflies, such as:



Peacock



Small Tortoiseshell



Comma



Brimstone



Small And Large White



Gatekeeper



Meadow Brown



Small Skipper



Orange-tip



Red Admiral



Small Copper



Ringlet



Speckled Wood



Common Blue

Moths



Mint Moth

Small, purple, and often seen on herbs.



Six-spot Burnet Moth

Black with red spots - a day-flying moth.



Cinnabar Moth

Black and red, with stripy caterpillars.

Other Insects



Shield Bugs

Often green or brown with shield-shaped bodies.



Bee-fly

A fuzzy fly that mimics a bee - harmless and fascinating.

For more information visit the following:

Bumblebee Conservation Trust

www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Bee Friendly Trust

<https://beefriendlytrust.org/meet-the-uks-first-bee-friendly-towns>

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation

<https://butterfly-conservation.org>

UK Moths

www.ukmoths.org.uk

NERC Act - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk

The Wildlife Trusts

www.wildlifetrusts.org

2 Providing nesting and shelter spaces

Bumblebees nest in a variety of places, including long grass, compost heaps, and abandoned burrows.

How your school can help

- ✓ Leave some areas of grass to grow long
- ✓ Create log piles or undisturbed corners
- ✓ Maintain compost heaps
- ✓ Install simple bumblebee nest boxes

Overwintering spots

Queen bumblebees hibernate over winter. Provide:

- ✓ Leaf piles
- ✓ Undisturbed soil patches
- ✓ Natural debris areas

These sheltered spaces will also benefit beetles, woodlice, frogs, and other small creatures.



3 Reducing risks to Bumblebees

Avoid pesticides

Pesticides can be harmful to bees. Schools should:

- ❗ Avoid using insecticides and weedkillers
- ✔ Teach pupils about safe, wildlife-friendly gardening
- ✔ Use natural alternatives such as hand-weeding or mulching

❗ Avoid pesticides - including aphid spray, moth balls and ant powder

Create safe foraging zones

- ✔ Keep bee-friendly areas away from heavy footfall
- ✔ Use signage to help pupils understand where bees are active

4 Learning and engagement

Classroom activities

- ✔ Lifecycle of a bumblebee
- ✔ Pollination experiments
- ✔ Art projects inspired by bees
- ✔ Citizen science projects such as bee counts

Outdoor learning

- ✔ Planting days
- ✔ Nature walks
- ✔ Bee identification challenges
- ✔ Observing pollinators in school gardens

Whole-school involvement

- ✔ Eco-committee leadership
- ✔ Assemblies on pollinators
- ✔ Family planting events
- ✔ Display boards showing progress toward the Bee Friendly School Award

5 Monitoring your Bee Friendly progress

To achieve the Bee Friendly School Award, schools typically need to:

Demonstrate increased bee-friendly planting

- ✔ Show evidence of habitat creation
- ✔ Engage pupils in learning about pollinators
- ✔ Share their achievements with the school community

Simple ways to track progress

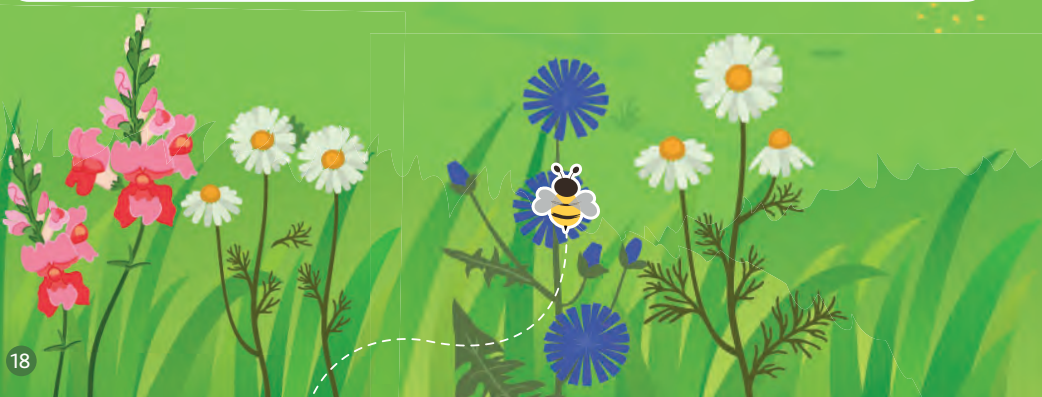
- ✔ Before-and-after photos
- ✔ Pupil journals or observation sheets
- ✔ A map of bee-friendly zones
- ✔ Seasonal checklists

6 Celebrating your success

Once your school has created meaningful habitat and engaged pupils in pollinator learning, you can proudly apply for the Bee Friendly School Award. Celebrate by:

Hosting a Bee Celebration Day

- ✔ Sharing your journey on newsletters or social media
- ✔ Creating a bee-themed display
- ✔ Encouraging pupils to become Bee Ambassadors



Final thoughts

Every flower planted, every patch of long grass left untouched, and every child inspired makes a difference. By taking part in the Bee Friendly School Award, your school becomes part of a nationwide effort to protect bumblebees and support a healthier environment for future generations.

Together, we can help bumblebees thrive.

Schools who are taking actions to become pollinator-friendly can apply for recognition from one (or both!) of the following organisations:



Bumblebee Conservation Trust: Bumblebee-friendly Schools Award

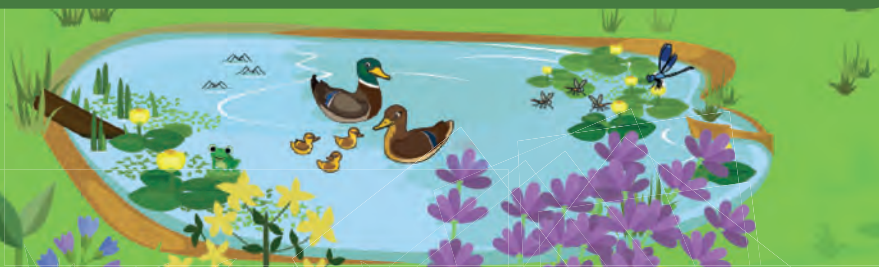
This curriculum-linked award recognises schools that take targeted action to support wild bumblebees, many of which are in decline due to habitat loss and other pressures. Schools must register directly with the Trust and complete a structured set of criteria across four 'Wings'.

www.bumblebeeconservation.org/learn-about-bumblebees/bumblebee-friendly-schools-award

Bee Friendly Trust: Bee Friendly Award

This award celebrates villages, towns and cities, as well as community groups, schools and businesses, for their bee-friendly initiatives.

<https://beefriendlytrust.org/bee-friendly-awards>





For more information about the Bee Friendly School Award
visit www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/beefriendly