Wildflower Gardens
St David's Park, Ewloe
Redrow

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Pollinator

Project overview

From our partnership with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT), we made a commitment to introduce a series of eco-friendly habitats to boost bumblebee numbers, starting with the grounds of our suburban headquarters in North Wales.

The three-wildflower areas comprise around 400m ² of bee and butterfly friendly planting, adding colour to the landscape for a cost of under £2000.

Planted by Redrow's groundsmen who sought advice on the optimum pollinator promoting seeds from the BBCT, a spectacular blanket of wildflowers has bloomed throughout the summer.

The park is already host to an abundance of wildlife through its ponds and grasslands but was missing a habitat where bumblebees could thrive.

Since the creation of our largest wildflower area, a sign informing the local community about the benefits of bees has been

Photo: Wildflower garden

placed with a viewing bench and a bumblebee safari undertaken with the staff of Redrow during a recent Green Day.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The areas that have been transformed into the wildflower gardens were previously grassland that was kept mown short and one smaller area of rough bare soil. Although aesthetically pleasing the areas provided little pollinator promoting plants or flowers.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

There were no specific conditions that led to Redrow carrying out this work, it's the beginning of a 12-month partnership, which will see Redrow support the work of the Trust with promotional activities and initiatives at its offices and developments across England and Wales.

We are firmly focussed on sustainability and taking care of the environment in which we operate.

We wanted to mark the start of this special partnership with some positive action to boost bumblebee and wildlife numbers closest to home, at our Group head office.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Due to the plight of the bumblebee Redrow were very aware of the need for an increased amount of valuable habitats for pollinators to be created.

The ecological value of these areas is priceless, since their creation we have witnessed an increase in bees to the area, a fantastic result to see in the first year.

The real test for the new habitats is the late summer period when we hope to have provided a sufficient area for the hibernating queens to survive the winter.

Three new habitats have been created which help bee, butterfly and other pollinators thrive in the park. Furthermore, wildflower gardens should be appearing all over the country with the help of Redrow's wildflower seeded welcome cards, which are given to all new homebuyers.

The wildflower garden is replicated on some of our developments, in particular at Pinhoe, Devon where a wildflower garden is a key feature and Windsor Park where the garden inspired a bumblebee themed bedroom.

Photo: Wildflower Garden information sign

Our skilled groundsmen took management of the area and captured weekly photographs throughout the germination and growth of the wildflower garden that enabled regular leaflets on progress updates.

The BBCT visited the wildflower area in the summer when a bee safari took place inviting Redrow employees to have guided walks identifying pollinator plants and bee species.

Before the project took place there was very little chance for pollinators to thrive on the grass, thus the main result of this project is a brand new habitat for pollinators as well as an area where local residents and Redrow employees to enjoy.

A key feature of the biggest wildflower garden, which is situated opposite the Redrow head office, is an information sign on the popular walking route making the public aware of the need for more pollinator friendly habitats.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

At the head office, there are three main wildflower gardens, we have also changed some of our landscaped garden areas to include pollinator friendly plants as advised through our partnership with the BBCT.

The open space behind St David's Park was dug over in the winter, after eradicating the weed growth this was planted with English bluebells, native primroses, snowdrops, daffodils and crocus, which produce a beautiful spring garden.

The steep former bare soil bank is a real showcase for poppies, red campion, stachy lanata, cornflower and honesty, which are all now established and supporting the local wildlife.

The former grass area is the largest wildflower garden, this area has thrived through the summer and works to attract bees and butterflies and provide them with a vital habitat; it is planted with a perennial seed mix thus sustainable for the future.

In addition to the wildflower gardens Redrow working with the BBCT have developed a co-branded seed dispenser tray and provided free packets of pollinator friendly seeds for all of our sales offices, country-fair events as well as co-branded PR material such as a "Gardening for Wildlife" leaflet.

In addition to this, wildflower seed impregnated change of address cards and welcome cards are given to customers to raise awareness of the need for these habitats.

The objective for this project was to ensure there are habitats, which are beneficial and sustainable for pollinators whilst informing more people about the need for bumblebee friendly flowers in our gardens.

We have had a huge positive response from the local community and Redrow employees about the wildflower gardens and feel they are a great success.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The plight of our wildlife in the face of climate change and the impact of modern living is increasingly brought to our attention through the media and the valuable work by conservation organisations. We want to help protect, enhance and create new habitats to support our wildlife wherever possible.