



# Norfolk Federation of WIs

Charity Number: 227411

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## **SoS for Honeybees**

As we move from summer to autumn it is good to think about the pleasures of the seasons - one of my favourite sounds of summer has to be the buzzing of bees around the garden, on the buddleia, courgettes, lavender, roses, and runner beans. Runner beans are arguably the most important in our house, as the bees are pollinating beans which will give us a lovely meal. The large yellow flowers on the courgettes are attractive and tasty in their own right, without the delicious green courgettes themselves. Lavender is one of the very useful plants which has many uses, both culinary and medicinal, not to mention giving us lovely scented oils. One of my traditional summer pastimes is making the dried seeds into sachets to perfume the airing cupboard during the winter. Without bees, these plants would not survive!

Nor would many of our plants, which means that we would not have much choice of food. Did you know that bees are crucial for every third mouthful of food that we eat? Bees pollinate our fruits, our vegetables, and our cereals. Whether you are vegan, vegetarian, flexitarian, or a dedicated barbecue fan you still need the food chain which is started by the hard-working bees!

We can all do something to help bees and insects with their vital work. However small our garden, patio, or balcony we can make our space an inviting habitat for these amazing creatures. A small pot on your balcony can contain some herbs to flavour your cooking and will certainly attract some visitors to feast on the flowers. If you are not keen on too much gardening, then take heart because bees and insects do not like an over manicured lawn! They like grass with wild flowers in it and many insects love a patch of nettles which provides many habitats. Flowers provide pollen and nectar which will attract many other visitors, such as butterflies, moths, and birds. It is all a wonderful ecosystem and as you welcome one species, others arrive as well. Birds feast on the insects. Dragonflies dart around the garden snatching the small insects which they love. The caterpillars of the butterflies and moths grow on many garden plants – although when they are munching their way through your cabbage plants you might not be so keen on them! Did you know that there are 24 species of bumblebee, 59 species of butterfly, and more than 2,500 moths in Britain?

Honey is another favourite product from bees and apparently, a 450 gram jar of honey requires 1152 bees to travel 180,246 km and visit 4,5 million flowers. That's 156 km per bee! We do not just have honey bees in our garden, there are many types of bees and we do have a few bee hotels for them to use. Bee hotels and bug houses are always popular and can be bought or just made from twigs and sticks which you can find in the garden.



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Now is the time to think about planting for wildlife as you think about what you would like in your garden next year. From the snowdrops in January onwards you can attract insects. Even a pot on your balcony or patio can attract visitors. Back in 2009, the WI passed a resolution acknowledging the vital role which bees play in the pollination of food crops and in our environment. We were concerned about the decline in the UK honeybee population and from this came one of our most popular campaigns – SoS for Honeybees! We have encouraged members to use honey in cooking, to make bee hotels, to plant bee-friendly plants, and make “bee seed bombs” to give to friends! So, let’s look forward to seeing beautiful flowers next spring when we can again listen to the buzzing of bees!

Find us at: [norfolk.thewi.org.uk/](http://norfolk.thewi.org.uk/)

<https://www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns/key-and-current-campaigns/sos-for-honeybees>

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