

Garden ideas for yourself and the Campaign Cup

The Norfolk Federation of WIs Public Affairs Committee has launched its Campaign Cup



**CORONATION
GARDENS**
For food & nature

competition to encourage people and communities help wildlife recover by growing food and creating space for nature in gardens, on balconies and in shared greenspaces.

As part of this launch, several members from around the county took part in a Zoom meeting on 9 April. Richard Hobbs, a local botanist and erstwhile director of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, talked about what to take into account as we take up the challenge to grow food in a way that also sustains wildlife and answered questions from members.

Key points that I took away from this were:

- There is no perfect solution, everything we do has consequences but, importantly, conserve everything you can, re-use and recycle. As part of this make your own compost and your own leafmould. Water is a scarce resource so remember that plants in pots require more watering than those in the ground and, if possible, have a way of collecting rainwater.
- Reduce the chance of disease through crop rotation and bear in mind that different 'pests' operate at different levels eg carrot flies are actually poor at flying, finding it difficult to clear obstacles such as even low, 40-60cm fencing made from insect-proof netting.
- Consider companion planting which will attract insects and reduce their impact on your veg.
- If you choose only one plant to add to your space, choose ivy which produces pollen and nectar in the Autumn, when not many other plants are doing this, and berries through the Winter for birds.
- A 'no dig' approach to your soil, combined with compost, gives your soil a better chance of supporting your plants. Tickle the soil rather than digging and turning it over.
- This year, most garden centres and nurseries will only be selling peat-free compost. These are improving but it is still the case that 'you get what you pay for'. SylvaGrow® was mentioned as a top-quality compost but it is more expensive than others. If you want to reduce the cost you can mix it with loam or with leafmould. Peat-free composts hold more water than those containing peat, so be careful not to overwater, but have fewer nutrients.
- If you wish to encourage butterflies, the caterpillars need the right food and the adults need flowers. White and yellow flowers are preferred by most insects and different insects need different shaped flowers
- Different things grow in different places. Our soil is not ideal for everything. Grow what you are good at!

