

## **Gardeners urged to let the grass grow to help bees**

Gardeners are being urged to cut the grass less often and grow more nectar-rich flowers to help boost the UK's declining bee population.

Despite concerns about the plight of bees in the UK, with many species in decline, more than half of 1717 people in a YouGov poll said they had not done anything to provide pollinating insects with food or homes in the past year. Now householders are being encouraged to take five steps to help bees, whose pollinating services are worth £600 million a year in boosting yields and the quality of seeds and fruits.

People can grow more flowers, shrubs and trees that are rich in nectar and pollen, leave patches of land to grow wild, cut grass less often, avoid disturbing or destroying nesting or hibernating insects and think carefully about whether to use pesticides.

Schoolchildren are also being given a summer holiday challenge to build "Bee hotels" out of simple items such as bamboo, plastic drinks bottles and string to give solitary bees a home. The call has been made ahead of "Bees' needs week", part of the national pollinator strategy in 2014 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in partnership with charities, businesses and academic institutions.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Defra's Lords spokesman, said: "It is clear we care about bees - now we need to make sure we translate that concern into real action to protect our precious pollinators."

Paul de Zylva, senior campaigner at

Friends of the Earth, said: "At home, in your street, at work or at school, you can help the 250 or more different types of bee by growing the right plants, improving local spaces for pollinators and avoiding pesticides. Simple actions can make sure we are the generation to save Britain's bees.

Gardeners have previously been warned that pesticides can affect the bee population, particularly in the summer when the use of bug sprays, fungicides and weed killers rises.

In the last 10 years, beekeepers in Britain, Europe, and North America have lost a third of their managed bee colonies. Bee species that are more selective in their flower-visiting habits or require special types of nesting sites are especially vulnerable.

By Daily Telegraph Reporter, Daily Telegraph Sat 9th July 2016