



WILD
NEIGHBOURS

ECOLOGY
REPORT

WILD NEIGHBOURS

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INTRODUCTION

Hello, I'm Michael Holland *F&S* – ecologist, author and nature educator – and in October 2024 I spent a day exploring the grounds of MODA, collecting soil samples, setting up a wildlife camera, and taking a close look at the living things already calling this place home. This first visit revealed an encouraging variety of species – from fungi and mosses to birds and beetles – each playing their part in the rich ecological web around you.

I returned in April 2025, as the seasons had turned and with them came new discoveries. Some of the plants had only just been planted as the site continues to develop, and with spring in full swing, more birds and insects were active – including two species of butterfly and several bumblebees. I also installed a remote listening device called an AudioMoth in a tree, which recorded the unmistakable high-pitched clicks of pipistrelle bats visiting the site – your nocturnal neighbours, flitting silently overhead.

It also struck me during the April workshops that the beautiful indoor plants thoughtfully placed throughout MODA Hove Central are just as much a part of this biological tapestry. These indoor species, many with fascinating origins and stories, have been included too – they're the plants you'll likely see most often, and they're worthy of attention.

This guide offers a broad snapshot of what's been found so far (170 species and counting), organised by groups: from fungi and lower plants to shrubs, trees, and animals (grouped playfully by how many legs they have – or don't!). Each species profile includes its ecological role, wildlife associations, origins, folklore, uses, and even artistic potential. Nature isn't just out there – it's also cultural, useful, and inspiring.

But this isn't a definitive list. Far from it! The natural world is dynamic and ever-changing – and you are warmly invited to continue this exploration. Take a stroll through the grounds, look more closely at a leaf, or listen to a dawn chorus. Use nature ID books or apps like *Picture This*, *Google Lens*, *iNaturalist*, and *Merlin* (for birdsong) to help uncover even more of your wild neighbours. Each observation adds a new thread to the story.

Whether you're a curious beginner or a seasoned nature-lover, this space belongs to you as much as it does to the house sparrow, the red valerian, or the rubber plant on the windowsill. Enjoy getting to know the life around you – and maybe even share what you find.

Let's see who's out there!



@pond_dipper

1. Fungi

Fungi in the Tubariaceae family

This family of small brown mushrooms includes many saprobic species that play crucial roles in decomposing plant matter.



Facts: Notable relatives include the genus *Tubaria*, which contains the common *Tubaria furfuracea* (Scurfy Twiglet). These fungi form important relationships with soil bacteria and contribute to nutrient cycling in urban environments.

Artistic potential: Their delicate forms and autumn colours could inspire detailed botanical illustrations or microscopic photography projects exploring fungal structures.

Fungi in the Strophariaceae family

This diverse family includes both wood rotting and soil-dwelling species. Notable relatives include *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Sulphur Tuft) and *Pholiota* species. Many members produce bioluminescence, particularly in their mycelium.



Facts: These fungi often indicate healthy soil ecosystems and can form beneficial relationships with garden plants through their extensive underground networks.

Artistic potential: Their often-vibrant colours and clustering growth patterns could inspire textile designs or sculptural installations exploring fungal networks.

2. Plants

2a) 'Lower Plants'

Orange Lichen

Species in *Teloschistaceae* family



Historical use:

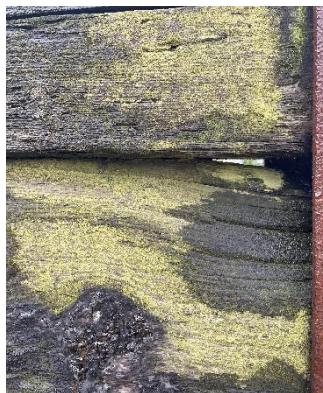
Historically used to produce dyes ranging from purple to yellow. Etymology: Teloschistaceae comes from Greek 'telos' (end) and 'schistos' (split). Ecological role: Pioneers in rock weathering, creating conditions for other plants to establish.

General facts:

This family includes the striking golden shield lichens (*Xanthoria*) and orange wall lichens (*Caloplaca*). These hardy organisms are actually a symbiotic partnership between fungi and algae. They're excellent bioindicators of air quality, being sensitive to sulphur dioxide pollution.

Artistic potential: Their intricate patterns and vivid colours could inspire abstract paintings or textural wall installations. Since a lichen is a partnership between an alga and fungus, this is a metaphor for teamwork.

Wood-dwelling Algae - These simple photosynthetic organisms often appear as green films on damp wood.



Facts:

They're typically members of green algae (*Chlorophyta*) and play a role in wood decomposition while providing food for small invertebrates.

Artistic potential:

Their subtle gradients of green could inspire watercolour techniques or studies in monochromatic painting.

Moss Species

Mosses are ancient plants that preceded vascular plants on land. They lack true roots and instead absorb water and nutrients directly through their leaves.



Ecological uses:

They provide important ecosystem services including:

- Water retention in soil
- Habitat for micro-invertebrates
- Early colonisation of bare ground
- Carbon sequestration

Artistic potential:

Their miniature forest-like appearance could inspire macro photography projects or sculptural installations exploring scale.

2b) Herbaceous Plants

Mixed Lawn Grasses - Grasses form the foundation of many ecosystems and have co-evolved with grazing animals. Urban lawns, while often seen as monocultures, can harbour surprising biodiversity.

Various species of Poaceae (very difficult to identify until they produce flowers and seed heads).



Ecological importance:

- Soil stabilisation
- Carbon sequestration
- Habitat for invertebrates
- Food source for herbivores

Artistic potential:

Their movement in wind could inspire kinetic sculptures or studies in natural rhythm

Common Ivy - This evergreen climber has deep cultural significance across Europe. Known as the "crown of poets" in ancient Rome. It can live several hundred years and is native to Europe and western Asia.

Scientific name: *Hedera helix*

Family: Araliaceae



Ecology:

- Crucial late-season nectar source for insects
- Dense cover provides nesting sites for birds
- Berries feed winter birds
- Not parasitic - uses trees only for support

Historical uses:

- Traditional medicine for respiratory conditions
- Dye plant producing blue-grey colours
- Used in wedding bouquets symbolising fidelity

Folklore: Associated with Dionysus/Bacchus; believed to prevent drunkenness.

Artistic potential: Geometric leaf patterns ideal for textile design; changing leaf shapes from juvenile to adult forms could inspire metamorphosis-themed works.

Bramble - A complex of microspecies, making it one of Britain's most taxonomically challenging plants.

Scientific name: *Rubus fruticosus*

Family: Rosaceae



Ecology:

- Essential wildlife corridor creator
- Provides nesting sites for birds
- Flowers support vast insect diversity
- Fruits feed over 40 bird species

Ethnobotany:

- Berries traditionally used for dye and food
- Young shoots eaten as spring vegetables
- Leaves used in traditional medicine for sore throats

Origin: Native to Europe

Folklore: Associated with Celtic autumn festivals; believed to ward off evil spirits when planted near doors

Artistic potential: Seasonal progression from flower to fruit offers opportunities for time-lapse photography or sequential art pieces.

Dog Rose - The wild rose of British hedgerows, named supposedly because its roots were thought to cure rabid dog bites.

Scientific name: *Rosa canina*

Family: Rosaceae



Ecology:

- Hips are vital winter bird food
- Supports specialist mining bees
- Host plant for various moth species
- Creates thorny refuge for small mammals

Medicinal uses:

- Hips high in vitamin C
- Traditional cold remedy
- Petals used in skin preparations

Origin: Native to Europe, northwest Africa, western Asia **Folklore:** Associated with Venus; featured in medieval heraldry

Artistic potential: Traditional subject for botanical illustration; hips and thorns offer contrasting elements for sculpture.

Blue Sea Holly - Despite its thistle-like appearance, it's actually a member of the carrot family.

Scientific name: *Eryngium planum*

Family: Apiaceae



Ecology:

- Excellent pollinator plant
- Attracts various beneficial insects
- Deep tap root improves soil structure

Uses:

- Ornamental dried flower
- 'Honey plant'
- Root traditionally candied as sweetmeat

Origin: Eastern Europe and central Asia

Lifespan: Short-lived perennial, 3-5 years

Artistic potential: Metallic blue colouration and architectural form ideal for modern garden design and botanical photography.

Common Spurge - Contains distinctive white latex sap shared by all spurges, including rubber trees.

Scientific name: *Euphorbia peplus*

Family: Euphorbiaceae



Ecology:

- Food plant for some specialist moth larvae
- Early source of pollen for insects
- Indicator of fertile soil

Traditional uses:

- Historically used to remove warts
- Traditional fish stunning plant
- Indicator of soil fertility
- Medical research

Origin: Native to Europe and North Africa

Etymology: 'Euphorbia' named after Euphorbius, ancient Greek physician

Artistic potential: Microscopic photography of characteristic latex cells; geometric growth patterns.

Caution: Latex can irritate skin!

Stinging Nettle - One of Britain's most ecologically valuable plants, supporting over 40 insect species.

Scientific name: *Urtica dioica*

Family: Urticaceae



Ecology:

- Essential food plant for many butterfly larvae
- Supports beneficial insects
- Indicates fertile soil
- Deep roots bring up nutrients

Traditional uses:

- Fibre for clothing and rope
- Spring vegetable
- Natural dye
- Feed for livestock

Origin: Native worldwide

Folklore: Associated with Loki, Thor and protection

Etymology: 'Urtica' from Latin 'urere' (to burn)

Artistic potential: Textile art using nettle fibre; microscopic studies of stinging hairs.

Dandelion - Name from French 'dent de lion' (lion's tooth), referring to serrated leaves.

Scientific name: *Taraxacum officinale*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecology:

- Critical early nectar source
- Seeds feed many bird species
- Deep tap root improves soil
- Indicator of soil conditions

Uses:

- All parts edible
- Traditional medicine for liver
- Coffee substitute from roots
- Wine from flowers

Origin: Native to Eurasia

Folklore: Traditional time-telling by seed heads

Scientific interest: Complex microspecies taxonomy

Artistic potential: Seed head photography; studies in natural geometry.

Herb Robert - Also known as Red Robin, Stinking Bob, and Death Come Quickly.

It is a strong-smelling annual herb.

Scientific name: *Geranium robertianum*

Family: Geraniaceae



Ecology:

- Shade-tolerant woodland plant
- Valuable for shaded garden areas
- Supports various pollinators
- Self-seeds readily

Traditional uses:

- Treatment for nosebleeds
- Insect repellent
- Astringent herb
- Traditionally used against toothache

Origin: Native to Europe

Etymology: Named after Saint Robert of Molesme, an 11th-century herbalist.

Folklore: Associated with household protection

Artistic potential: Study of red stem coloration; seed dispersal mechanism illustrations

Small-flowered Alumroot

Scientific name: *Heuchera micrantha*

Family: Saxifragaceae



Ecology:

- Shade-tolerant perennial
- Attracts hoverflies
- Ground cover in woodland gardens
- Drought resistant once established

Uses:

- Ornamental foliage plant
- Traditional Native American medicine
- Roots used as astringent

Origin: Western North America

Lifespan: Long-lived perennial

Cultural significance: Important medicinal plant for indigenous peoples

Artistic potential: Diverse leaf colours and patterns for textile design.

Bindweed - Also known as Field Bindweed or Wild Morning Glory.

Scientific name: *Convolvulus arvensis*

Family: Convolvulaceae



Ecology:

- Deep roots can reach 5m
- Important nectar source
- Supports specialist bee species
- Soil stabiliser

Traditional uses:

- Ropes from stems
- Traditional purgative
- Indicator of deep soils

Origin: Europe and Asia

Status: Can be invasive in gardens

Lifecycle: Perennial with extensive root system

Artistic potential: Spiral growth patterns; time-lapse of flower opening.

Horsetail - Living fossil dating back 300 million years.

Scientific name: *Equisetum arvense*

Family: Equisetaceae



Ecology:

- Pioneer species
- Indicates wet soil conditions
- Deep-rooting soil stabiliser
- Ancient lineage

Uses:

- Traditional pot scourer
- Metal polishing
- Source of silica
- Traditional medicine

Origin: Native worldwide

Folklore: Associated with snake spirits

Scientific interest: Prehistoric plant survival

Artistic potential: Segmented structure studies; prehistoric landscape reconstructions.

Lavender – a culinary Mediterranean herb with a long history in perfumery.

Scientific name: *Lavandula angustifolia*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Major nectar source
- Supports numerous pollinators
- Drought resistant

Uses:

- Essential oil production
- Culinary herb
- Traditional sleep aid
- Moth repellent

Etymology: References historical use in washing - Latin 'lavare' (to wash).

Artistic potential: Purple colour studies; aromatic installation art.

Teasel - Historical importance in wool processing, where dried heads were used to raise the nap on cloth.

Scientific name: *Dipsacus fullonum*

Family: Caprifoliaceae



Ecology:

- Seeds vital winter food for birds, especially goldfinches
- Water collecting leaf bases provide microhabitat for insects
- Flowers supports bees and other pollinators, seeds are popular with Goldfinches
- Important architectural winter plant

Uses:

- Traditional textile processing
- Ornamental dried flower
- Water reservoirs studied for biomimicry
- Historical veterinary medicine

Origin: Europe and Asia

Folklore: Water collected in leaf bases used as beauty treatment

Lifespan: Biennial

Artistic potential: Strong architectural forms; historical industrial connections.

Ribwort Plantain - Called "soldier's herb" for wound-healing properties.

Scientific name: *Plantago lanceolata*

Family: Plantaginaceae



Ecology:

- Important food plant for butterflies
- Seeds eaten by birds
- Indicator of ancient grassland
- Deep tap root improves soil

Medicinal uses:

- Traditional wound healer
- Cough remedy
- Anti-inflammatory
- Used in eye treatments

Origin: Eurasian but now worldwide

Folklore: Used in love divination

Etymology: 'Plantago' refers to sole of foot shape

Artistic potential: Studies of leaf venation; traditional medicine storytelling.

Greater Plantain - Known as "white man's footsteps" by Native Americans, noting its spread with European settlement.

Scientific name: *Plantago major*

Family: Plantaginaceae



Ecology:

- Withstands heavy trampling
- Seeds important for birds
- Indicator of compacted soil
- Supports plantain moth

Uses:

- Traditional wound herb
- Edible leaves and seeds
- Livestock fodder
- Fibre source

Origin: Eurasian

Folklore: Associated with healing and protection

Scientific interest: Adaptation to trampling

Artistic potential: Study of human impact patterns; urban ecology documentation.

Snapdragon - Name derives from Greek meaning "nose-like", referring to the flower shape.

Scientific name: *Antirrhinum majus*

Family: Plantaginaceae



Ecology:

- Excellent nectar source for bees
- Seeds feed finches
- Self-seeds readily
- Supports specialist bee species

Uses:

- Traditional garden plant
- Cut flowers
- Children's games
- Dye plant historically

Origin: Mediterranean

Folklore: Opening the 'dragon's mouth' brings good luck

Scientific interest: Complex flower genetics studies

Artistic potential: Stop-motion of flower opening; children's interactive installations.

Creeping Thyme - Low-growing aromatic herb forming dense mats.

Scientific name: *Thymus serpyllum*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Essential for many bee species
- Ground cover preventing erosion
- Drought resistant
- Supports specialist moths

Uses:

- Culinary herb
- Traditional antiseptic
- Ground cover between paving
- Aromatherapy

Origin: Europe and North Africa

Folklore: Believed to give courage

Etymology: 'Serpyllum' means creeping

Artistic potential: Textural ground studies; scented garden design.

Common Thyme - One of the most important culinary herbs in European tradition.

Scientific name: *Thymus vulgaris*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Major nectar source
- Drought tolerant
- Supports specialist bees
- Mediterranean herb adaptation

Uses:

- Essential culinary herb
- Traditional medicine
- Honey production
- Antimicrobial properties

Origin: Mediterranean

Folklore: Associated with courage and purification

Scientific interest: High thymol content

Artistic potential: Aromatic sculpture; botanical perfume projects.

Roman Chamomile - Traditional lawn plant of English gardens.

Scientific name: *Chamaemelum nobile*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecology:

- Low-growing perennial
- Attracts beneficial insects
- Releases aromatic compounds
- Drought tolerant

Uses:

- Traditional calming tea
- Lawn substitute
- Hair lightening
- Essential oil production

Origin: Western Europe

Eymology: From Greek 'earth apple'

Folklore: One of the Nine Sacred Herbs of Anglo-Saxons

Artistic potential: Studies of scent mapping; sensory garden design.

Rosemary - Name means "dew of the sea", referring to its Mediterranean coastal origin.

Scientific name: *Salvia rosmarinus* (previously *Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Winter nectar source
- Supports various pollinators
- Drought adapted
- Long flowering period

Uses:

- Culinary herb
- Memory enhancement
- Traditional medicine
- Essential oil production

Origin: Mediterranean

Folklore: Symbol of remembrance **Scientific interest:** Cognitive enhancement studies

Artistic potential: Aromatic installations; memory-themed works.

Bethlehem Lungwort - Spotted leaves traditionally associated with diseased lungs, hence used for lung complaints.

Scientific name: *Pulmonaria saccharata*

Family: Boraginaceae



Ecology:

- Early nectar source
- Shade tolerant
- Woodland edge species
- Supports early bumblebees

Uses:

- Traditional lung medicine
- Ornamental ground cover
- Spring forage for bees
- Dried flower decoration

Origin: European **Eymology:** 'Pulmonaria' refers to lungs

Folklore: Spots believed to be Mary's milk drops

Artistic potential: Spotted leaf patterns; medical history installations. Colour-changing flowers could inspire kinetic art installations.

Cleavers - Also known as Goosegrass, Sticky Willie, or Velcro Plant.

Scientific name: *Galium aparine*

Family: Rubiaceae



Ecology:

- Supports shield bugs
- Seeds eaten by birds
- Natural Velcro-like hooks
- Indicator of rich soil

Uses:

- Traditional spring tonic
- Coffee substitute (roasted seeds)
- Natural sieves (stems)
- Used in cheese-making historically

Origin: Native to Europe **Etymology:** 'Aparine' from Greek 'to seize'

Folklore: Used to stuff mattresses

Artistic potential: Biomimicry studies; natural adhesion artwork.

Michaelmas Daisy - Important late-season nectar source.

Scientific name: *Symphyotrichum x salignum*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecology:

- Crucial autumn pollinator plant
- Supports late butterflies
- Winter seed source for birds
- Long flowering period

Uses:

- Traditional Michaelmas decoration
- Cut flowers
- Honey production
- Garden structure

Origin: Garden hybrid

Folklore: Associated with St. Michael's Day

Status: Garden escape, naturalised

Artistic potential: Seasonal change documentation; autumn colour studies.

Purpletop Vervain- Tall, airy perennial with clusters of purple flowers.

Family: Verbenaceae

Scientific name: *Verbena bonariensis*



Ecology:

- Major butterfly attractor
- See-through plant structure
- Long flowering season
- Self-seeds readily

Uses:

- Architectural garden plant
- Cut flower
- Traditional medicine in South America
- Butterfly gardens

Origin: South America

Status: Naturalised in UK **Lifespan:** Short-lived perennial

Artistic potential: Transparent spatial studies; movement photography.

Maize - One of world's most important food crops.

Scientific name: *Zea mays*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Provides cover for wildlife
- Seeds feed birds and mammals
- Wind-pollinated grass
- High biomass producer

Uses:

- Food crop
- Industrial products – including anti-bacterial hand gel, stage blood & nappies
- Biofuel
- Animal feed

Origin: Mexico

Cultural significance: Sacred to many Native American peoples

Scientific interest: C4 photosynthesis studies

Artistic potential: Studies of scale; agricultural heritage projects.

Tomato - Originally grown as ornamental, thought poisonous

Scientific name: *Solanum lycopersicum*

Family: Solanaceae



Ecology:

- Supports various insects
- Self-fertile flowers
- Rich in wild relatives
- Host for specialist moths

Uses:

- Major food crop
- Rich vitamin source
- Companion plant
- Research model organism

Origin: South America Etymology: 'Lycopersicum' means wolf peach

Scientific interest: Complex genetics

Artistic potential: Studies of fruit development; food heritage documentation.

Oilseed Rape - Major agricultural crop with significant impact on landscape.

Scientific name: *Brassica napus*

Family: Brassicaceae



Ecology:

- Important early nectar source
- Supports numerous insects
- Green manure potential
- High biomass producer

Uses:

- Vegetable oil production
- Biodiesel feedstock
- Animal feed
- Honey production

Origin: Mediterranean hybrid

Status: Cultivated, sometimes persistent

Scientific interest: Polyploid genetics

Artistic potential: Yellow landscape studies; agricultural documentation.

Northern Sea Oats - Ornamental grass with distinctive flat seedheads.

Scientific name: *Chasmanthium latifolium*

Family: Poaceae

Common name: Northern Sea Oats



Ecology:

- Winter food source for birds
- Erosion control
- Shade tolerant
- Native woodland grass

Uses:

- Ornamental grass
- Dried flower arrangements
- Bank stabilisation
- Wildlife gardens

Origin: Eastern North America

Lifespan: Long-lived perennial

Status: Garden plant

Artistic potential: Movement studies; seed head sculptures.

Cabbage Palm - Distinctive architectural plant.

Scientific name: *Cordyline australis*

Family: Asparagaceae



Ecology:

- Nesting sites for birds
- Nectar source when flowering
- Shelter for insects
- Coastal adaptation

Uses:

- Architectural specimen
- Traditional Māori food source
- Fibre production
- Coastal gardens

Origin: New Zealand

Cultural significance: Important to Māori people

Status: Ornamental in UK

Artistic potential: Linear form studies; cultural heritage projects.

Spotted Medick - Distinguished by dark spots on leaves.

Scientific name: *Medicago arabica*

Family: Fabaceae



Ecology:

- Nitrogen fixing
- Bee forage plant
- Ground cover
- Soil improver

Uses:

- Green manure
- Fodder crop
- Lawn alternative
- Soil conditioning

Origin: Mediterranean

Etymology: 'Medick' from ancient Media

Status: Naturalised in UK

Artistic potential: Pattern studies; sustainable agriculture documentation.

Purple Toadflax - Delicate purple spikes with long flowering period.

Scientific name: *Linaria purpurea*

Family: Plantaginaceae



Ecology:

- Important for bees
- Self-seeds readily
- Wall specialist
- Drought tolerant

Uses:

- Traditional dye plant
- Ornamental
- Wildlife gardens
- Green roof plant

Origin: Mediterranean

Status: Naturalised in UK

Folklore: Associated with fairies

Artistic potential: Vertical garden designs; urban ecology studies.

Oregano – a herb with significant culinary importance.

Scientific name: *Origanum vulgare*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Major nectar source
- Supports diverse pollinators
- Drought resistant
- Mediterranean adaptation

Uses:

- Essential culinary herb
- Traditional medicine
- Essential oil production
- Honey flavouring

Origin: Europe and Asia

Etymology: Greek for 'joy of the mountains'

Folklore: Symbol of happiness

Artistic potential: Aromatic installations; culinary heritage documentation.

Woody Nightshade (Bittersweet) -Climbing plant with toxic berries and beautiful flowers.

Scientific name: *Solanum dulcamara*

Family: Solanaceae



Ecology:

- Important for bees
- Berries feed birds
- Supports specialist insects
- Woodland edge species

Uses:

- Traditional medicine
- Historically used for skin conditions
- Dye plant
- Indicator of ancient woodlands

Origin: Europe and Asia

Toxicity: All parts toxic to humans

Folklore: Associated with witchcraft

Artistic potential: Studies of toxic beauty; medical history projects.

Catmint - a mint relative beloved by cats.

Scientific name: *Nepeta faassenii*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecology:

- Major bee attractor
- Drought tolerant
- Long flowering period
- Pest deterrent

Uses:

- Cat attraction
- Traditional calming herb
- Garden pest control
- Ornamental

Origin: Garden hybrid

Lifespan: Short-lived perennial

Chemical interest: Nepetalactone effects

Artistic potential: Interactive installations; animal behaviour studies.

Creeping Wood Sorrel -Low-growing plant with trifoliate leaves.

Scientific name: *Oxalis corniculata*

Family: Oxalidaceae



Ecology:

- Ground cover in shade
- Edible leaves (in moderation)
- Indicator of acid soil
- Interesting leaf movements

Uses:

- Traditional salad plant
- Source of oxalic acid
- Soil pH indicator
- Children's nature studies

Origin: Uncertain, possibly Asia

Status: Naturalised worldwide

Scientific interest: Photonastic movements

Artistic potential: Time-lapse of leaf movements; pH indicator art.

New York Aster -Important late-season garden plant.

Scientific name: *Sympyotrichum novi-belgii*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecology:

- Crucial autumn nectar source
- Supports late butterflies
- Winter seed source
- Long flowering period

Uses:

- Cut flowers
- Late season colour
- Butterfly gardens
- Urban wildlife support

Origin: North America

Lifespan: Perennial

Artistic potential: Seasonal change documentation; pollinator interaction studies.

Chinese Silver Grass -Tall ornamental grass with architectural presence.

Scientific name: *Miscanthus sinensis*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Winter shelter for insects
- Bird nesting material
- Seeds feed finches
- Wind movement in gardens

Uses:

- Ornamental grass
- Biofuel crop
- Screens and barriers
- Erosion control

Origin: East Asia

Scientific interest: C4 photosynthesis research

Artistic potential: Movement studies; sustainable energy art.

Reed Canary Grass - Tall wetland grass with variegated forms.

Scientific name: *Phalaris arundinacea*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Bank stabilisation
- Wetland habitat
- Nesting sites for birds
- Water filtration

Uses:

- Phytoremediation
- Paper production
- Thatching
- Biomass crop

Origin: Northern hemisphere

Invasive potential: Can spread aggressively

Artistic potential: Environmental restoration documentation; water movement studies.

Lesser Periwinkle - Evergreen ground cover with blue flowers

native to Central and Southern Europe

Scientific name: *Vinca minor*

Family: Apocynaceae



Ecology:

- Early nectar source
- Soil stabiliser
- Shade tolerant
- Year-round cover

Uses:

- Ground cover
- Traditional medicine
- Alkaloid source
- Grave plantings
- Source of vincamine (a medical substance)

Folklore: Symbol of friendship

Artistic potential: Studies in blue; memory garden designs.

Lilyturf - Grass-like perennial with purple flower spikes.

Scientific name: *Liriope muscari*

Family: Asparagaceae



Ecology:

- Shade tolerant
- Erosion control
- Late season nectar
- Evergreen structure

Uses:

- Ground cover
- Border edging
- Slope stabilisation
- Urban plantings

Origin: East Asia

Lifespan: Long-lived perennial

Artistic potential: Linear pattern studies; urban design documentation.

Black-Eyed Susan - Long-flowering perennial with distinctive dark centres.

Scientific name: *Rudbeckia fulgida*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecology:

- Late summer nectar source
- Seeds feed finches
- Winter architectural interest
- Supports native bees

Uses:

- Prairie-style gardens
- Cut flowers
- Traditional dye plant
- Wildlife gardens

Origin: North America

Etymology: Named after Swedish botanists, the Rudbecks

Lifespan: Long-lived perennial

Artistic potential: Studies in contrast; prairie landscape documentation.

Golden Shield Fern - Robust evergreen fern with golden scales.

Scientific name: *Dryopteris affinis*

Family: Dryopteridaceae



Ecology:

- Shade provider
- Winter shelter for invertebrates
- Soil stabiliser
- Woodland understory species

Uses:

- Shade gardens
- Air purification
- Traditional medicine
- Architectural foliage

Origin: Europe

Scientific interest: Apogamous reproduction

Artistic potential: Shadow pattern studies; prehistoric plant forms.

Ostrich Fern - Dramatic vase-shaped fern with edible fiddleheads.

Scientific name: *Struthiopteris castanea*

Family: Onocleaceae



Ecology:

- Ground stabilisation
- Habitat for amphibians
- Shade creation
- Woodland edge species

Uses:

- Edible fiddleheads
- Ornamental
- Stream bank stabilisation
- Traditional medicine

Origin: Northern hemisphere

Folklore: Associated with spring rituals

Conservation: Indicator of ancient woodland

Artistic potential: Fractal pattern studies; food forest documentation.

Pendulous Sedge - Our largest native sedge with dramatic hanging seedheads.

Scientific name: *Carex pendula*

Family: Cyperaceae



Ecology:

- Bank stabilisation
- Wetland indicator
- Cover for small mammals
- Seeds feed birds

Uses:

- Water garden plantings
- Traditional basketry
- Stream restoration
- Rain gardens

Origin: Europe

Habitat: Damp woods and stream sides

Artistic potential: Studies in gravity; water movement documentation.

Japanese Sedge - Ornamental sedge with variegated forms.

Scientific name: *Carex oshimensis*

Family: Cyperaceae



Ecology:

- Ground cover
- Erosion control
- Shade tolerant
- Year-round interest

Uses:

- Container plantings
- Shade gardens
- Green roof vegetation
- Urban landscaping

Origin: Japan

Cultivars: Many variegated forms

Artistic potential: Linear pattern studies; light and shadow documentation.

Blue Fescue - Ornamental grass known for its blue-grey foliage.

Scientific name: *Festuca glauca*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Drought tolerant
- Supports soil structure
- Winter interest
- Low maintenance habitat

Uses:

- Rock gardens
- Coastal plantings
- Green roofs
- Urban landscaping

Origin: Europe

Lifespan: Evergreen perennial

Artistic potential: Colour studies in blue; textural installations.

Forest Reed Grass - Upright architectural grass (up to 1.5m)

Scientific name: *Calamagrostis arundinacea*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Winter shelter for insects
- Nesting material for birds
- Soil stabiliser
- Woodland edge species

Uses:

- Vertical accent
- Screen planting
- Cut flower arrangements
- Sound barriers

Origin: Europe and Asia

Artistic potential: Studies in vertical movement; sound installation art.

Switchgrass - Tall prairie grass with autumn colour.

Scientific name: *Panicum virgatum*

Family: Poaceae



Ecology:

- Wildlife shelter
- Bird food source
- Deep root system
- Carbon sequestration

Uses:

- Biofuel crop
- Erosion control
- Prairie restoration
- Rain gardens

Origin: North America

Scientific interest: Climate change mitigation

Artistic potential: Seasonal change documentation; sustainability art.

Japanese Spurge - Evergreen ground cover for deep shade.

Scientific name: *Pachysandra terminalis*

Family: Buxaceae

**Ecology:**

- Shade tolerance
- Soil stabilisation
- Winter shelter for invertebrates
- Woodland ground cover

Uses:

- Deep shade plantings
- Erosion control
- Alternative to lawn
- Cemetery plantings

Origin: Japan and China

Growth: Spreading by rhizomes

Artistic potential: Studies in green; shade garden design.

Gallant Soldier - Small annual with tiny white flowers.

Scientific name: *Galinsoga parviflora*

Family: Asteraceae

**Ecology:**

- Pioneer species
- Supports small pollinators
- Indicator of rich soil
- Multiple generations per year

Uses:

- Edible leaves
- Traditional medicine
- Soil fertility indicator
- Research species

Origin: South America

Status: Naturalised in UK

Etymology: Named after Spanish botanist Galinsoga.

Artistic potential: Studies in plant migration; urban ecology documentation.

Salt-green Goosefoot - A rare annual plant of coastal areas and salt marshes, this species is of conservation concern in the UK.

Scientific name: *Oxybasis chenopodioides*

Family: Amaranthaceae

**Ecological Significance:**

- Indicator species for saltmarsh habitats
- Seeds provide food for coastal birds
- Tolerant of saline conditions

Uses:

- Livestock fodder
- Helps stabilise coastal soils
- Habitat and food for insects and birds in salt marshes

Origin: Coastal areas of Europe and Western Asia

Status: Naturalised in many regions globally, protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Etymology: From Greek "oxy" (sharp) and "basis" (base), referring to the plant base

Artistic potential: Environmental art installations highlighting coastal habitat loss. Natural dye potential from the stems.

White Clover - This common lawn plant is far more significant ecologically than its ubiquity might suggest.

Scientific name: *Trifolium repens*

Family: Fabaceae (Pea family)



Ecological Significance:

- Nitrogen-fixing bacteria in root nodules improve soil fertility
- Essential food plant for many bee species
- Supports over 200 species of phytophagous insects
- Important component of livestock grazing systems

Folklore & Symbolism:

- Four-leaved variants considered lucky (odds approximately 1 in 10,000)
- Sacred to druids who believed it warded off evil spirits
- Symbol of Ireland alongside three-leaved shamrock

Origin: Europe and Central Asia

Status: Widespread globally, important forage crop

Etymology: "Trifolium" means three-leaved, "repens" means creeping

Artistic potential: High; commonly used in patterns, Celtic art, and symbolism

Fat Hen - Once a staple food crop in Europe, this common 'weed' has a rich cultural history.

Scientific name: *Chenopodium album*

Family: Amaranthaceae



Historical Uses:

- Archaeological evidence of cultivation from the Bronze Age
- Traditional famine food across Europe
- Young leaves once more nutritious than spinach
- Seeds found in the stomach of Tollund Man bog body
- Host plant for leaf miners and shield bugs

Ecological Role:

- Important food plant for many bird species
- Supports numerous moth species including:
 - The Nutmeg (*Discestra trifolii*)
 - Garden Dart (*Euxoa nigricans*)

Origin: Eurasia

Status: Common worldwide weed

Etymology: "Chenopodium" means goose foot, referring to leaf shape

Artistic potential: Natural dyeing (produces various greens), Archaeological reconstruction artwork.

Lentil - One of humanity's oldest cultivated plants, with evidence of cultivation dating back to 11,000 BCE.

Scientific name: *Lens culinaris*

Family: Fabaceae



Historical Significance:

- Found in Egyptian tombs from 2400 BCE
- Mentioned in the Bible (Esau's mess of pottage)
- Traditional Lenten food in Christian cultures

Ecological Benefits:

- Nitrogen fixing capabilities improve soil fertility
- Deep roots help prevent soil erosion
- Supports beneficial soil microorganisms

Origin: Middle East

Status: Major food crop globally

Etymology: Latin 'lens' referring to the shape of the seed

Artistic potential: Seed mandalas, archaeological themes, food security artwork.

Japanese Anemone - Despite its name, this elegant perennial originated in China's Hupeh province.

Scientific name: *Anemone hupehensis var. japonica*

Family: Ranunculaceae (Buttercup family)



Garden Value:

- Late summer to autumn flowering period
- Excellent for pollinators when other flowers are scarce
- Thrives in partial shade

Cultural Significance:

- In Chinese culture, represents anticipation
- Victorian language of flowers: forsaken
- Japanese symbol of fragility and death

Origin: China

Etymology: "Anemone" from Greek "wind flower".

Artistic Potential: Wind movement studies (name 'anemone' means 'daughter of the wind'), Cultural fusion artwork, Seasonal transition pieces. Popular in East Asian art and garden design.

Annual Fleabane - A naturalised species in the UK, this daisy-like plant has spread globally from its North American origins.

Scientific name: *Erigeron annuus*

Family: Asteraceae (Daisy family)



Ecological Significance:

- Valuable late-season nectar source
- Pioneer species in disturbed ground
- Seeds dispersed by wind (anemochory)
- Can form extensive colonies through vegetative spread

Etymology & Folk History:

- 'Erigeron' from Greek 'eri' (early) and 'geron' (old man), referring to the early production of white fluffy seedheads
- Traditional belief that the smoke from burning plants would drive away fleas
- Used by Native Americans for stopping nosebleeds

Artistic Potential: Seed head photography, Wind dispersal installations, colonial growth pattern studies.

Guernsey Fleabane - A recent arrival to Britain showing rapid adaptation to urban environments. It is native to South America and it is spreading through global trade.

Scientific name: *Erigeron sumatrensis*

Family: Asteraceae



Urban Ecology:

- Thrives in wall cracks
- Heat island tolerant
- Drought resistant
- Quick to colonise disturbed ground

Environmental Indicators:

- Climate change adaptation
- Urban development
- Human activity patterns
- Global trade impacts

Etymology: Wrongly named after Sumatra.

Artistic Potential: Urban ecology documentation, Global movement mapping, Climate change visualisation.

Black Nightshade - A complex species with a rich folklore history, related to both tomatoes and potatoes. It is associated with witchcraft in European folklore.

Scientific name: *Solanum nigrum*

Family: Solanaceae (Nightshade family)



Toxicity & Uses:

- Ripe berries edible (though caution advised due to easy confusion with toxic relatives)
- Unripe berries toxic
- Traditional medicinal uses in many cultures
- Used in traditional Indian medicine (Ayurveda) and in traditional African medicine

Ecological Role:

- Berries eaten by birds who disperse seeds
- Host plant for various moths including:
 - Angle Shades (*Phlogophora meticulosa*)
 - Dark Arches (*Apamea monoglypha*)

Etymology: 'Solanum' from Latin 'solamen' (soothing), 'nigrum' means black.

Artistic Potential: Poison garden installations, Folklore illustration series, medical history exhibitions.

Sweet Vernal Grass - an aromatic grass that gives hay its characteristic sweet smell.

Scientific name: *Anthoxanthum odoratum*

Family: Poaceae (Grass family)



Ecological Significance:

- Important component of permanent pastures
- Contains coumarin, giving fresh hay its sweet scent
- Supports numerous grass-feeding invertebrates
- Early flowering provides pollen source for insects

Agricultural History:

- Traditional hay meadow species
- Indicator of unimproved grassland
- Used in butter-making to add flavour
- Important in traditional dairy farming

Etymology: Greek 'anthos' (flower) and 'xanthos' (yellow).

Artistic Potential: Sound art with moving grass stems, Scent installations, Traditional farming documentation.

Tiger Grass - An Asian grass species known for its ornamental and practical uses.

Scientific name: *Thysanolaena latifolia*

Family: Poaceae



Traditional Uses:

- Broom-making material in Southeast Asia
- Soil stabilisation on steep slopes
- Traditional craft material
- Ornamental in tropical gardens

Ecological Value:

- Excellent erosion control
- Provides shelter for small mammals
- Dense growth supports invertebrate populations
- Deep root system improves soil structure

Etymology: Greek 'thysanos' (fringe) and 'laina' (cloak).

Artistic Potential: Traditional craft demonstrations, Erosion control visualisation, Environmental sculpture.

Black Medick - An often overlooked small relative of alfalfa that plays a vital role in soil health.

Scientific name: *Medicago lupulina*

Family: Fabaceae



Ecological Benefits:

- Nitrogen fixing capabilities
- Important nectar source for small bees
- Seeds eaten by birds
- Indicator of calcareous (chalky) soils

Agricultural History:

- Traditional fodder crop
- Used in meadow restoration
- Green manure plant
- Indicator of well-drained soils

Etymology: 'Medick' from its origin in Media (ancient Persia).

Artistic Potential: Soil improvement documentation, microscopic root nodule studies, Pollinator observation projects.

Garden Phlox - A beloved garden plant from North America with a rich horticultural history which was a favourite of Victorians and was bred extensively for colour variations (with over 850 cultivars developed).

Scientific name: *Phlox paniculata*

Family: Polemoniaceae

**Ecological Value:**

- Major butterfly nectar source
- Night-scented flowers attract moths
- Long flowering period supports late-season pollinators
- Dense growth provides bird nesting sites

Cultural Significance:

- Victorian language of flowers: "Our souls are united"
- Name derives from Greek 'phlox' meaning flame
- Associated with dreams of departed loved ones in some folklore

Etymology: Greek 'phlox' meaning flame.

Artistic Potential: Scent mapping installations, Colour variation studies, Victorian garden recreation.

Yarrow- A plant steeped in mythology and traditional medicine.

Scientific name: *Achillea millefolium*

Family: Asteraceae

**Historical Uses:**

- Named for Achilles who used it to treat wounds
- Traditional styptic for nosebleeds
- Used in Chinese divination (I Ching)
- Medieval strewing herb

Ecological Significance:

- Supports over 30 species of butterfly and moth
- Deep roots bring up minerals
- Attracts predatory wasps and hoverflies
- Indicator of ancient grassland

Folklore: a traditional wedding herb used in love divination, said to ward off evil, and associated with courage and healing.

Etymology: Named after Achilles; 'millefolium' means 'thousand-leaved'.

Artistic Potential: Divination tool recreation, Medicinal herb garden design, Botanical printing.

Vervain - This historically significant herb has been revered across cultures for millennia.

Scientific name: *Verbena officinalis*

Family: Verbenaceae

**Historical Significance:**

- Sacred herb to Ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Druids
- Used to clean Jupiter's temple in Rome
- Traditional 'herb of enchantment'
- One of the nine sacred herbs of Anglo-Saxon Britain

Ecological Role:

- Attracts bumblebees and butterflies
- Seeds eaten by finches
- Supports specialist mining bees
- Indicator of ancient grassland

Medicinal History: Traditional nerve tonic, Used in European folk medicine for melancholy, Chinese medicine uses it for liver complaints, Name 'officinalis' indicates medical use.

Etymology: Latin 'verbena' meaning sacred bough.

Artistic Potential: Sacred herb garden designs, historical medicine installations, religious art connections.

Lesser Swine-cress - A small but widespread plant with a distinctive pungent aroma.

Scientific name: *Lepidium didymum*

Family: Brassicaceae (Cabbage family)

**Distribution:**

- Native to South America
- Naturalised globally
- Common in urban areas
- Indicator of disturbed ground

Ecological Adaptations:

- Thrives in compacted soil
- Tolerant of trampling
- Seeds spread by foot traffic
- Quick to colonise bare ground

Etymology: Greek ‘lepidion’ means ‘small scale’, ‘didymum’ means ‘twin’.

Artistic Potential: Urban ecology documentation, human impact studies, seed dispersal mapping.

Common Broomrape - A fascinating parasitic plant that lacks chlorophyll.

Scientific name: *Orobanche minor*

Family: Orobanchaceae

**Ecological Relationships:**

- Parasitises clover and other legumes
- Complete dependence on host plants
- Complex underground connections
- Indicator of ancient grassland

Scientific Interest:

- Evolution of parasitism
- Plant communication studies
- Host-parasite relationships
- Chemical signalling research

Folk History: Associated with witchcraft, used in love potions, considered an omen of crop failure.

Etymology: Greek ‘orobos’ (vetch) and ‘anchein’ (to strangle).

Artistic Potential: Underground connection mapping, parasitic relationship illustrations, scientific process documentation.

Creeping Buttercup A common but fascinating plant with significant folklore associations.

Scientific name: *Ranunculus repens*

Family: Ranunculaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Important early nectar source
- Supports numerous invertebrates
- Prevents soil erosion
- Food plant for various moth species
- Considered a sign of fertile soil.

Wildlife Value:

- Provides cover for small mammals
- Seeds eaten by birds
- Flowers used by solitary bees
- Leaves feed various beetle species

Folk Traditions: Used in children's games ("Do you like butter?"), associated with wealth and riches,

Etymology: Latin diminutive of ‘rana’ (frog), ‘repens’ means ‘creeping’.

Artistic Potential: Childhood memory projects, Traditional game documentation, Folklore illustration series.

Black Mustard - An ancient crop plant with global culinary significance, mentioned in Biblical texts and traded as a commodity since medieval times.

Scientific name: *Brassica nigra*

Family: Brassicaceae

**Culinary History:**

- Main source of brown mustard
- Used in Roman cuisine
- Traditional pickling spice
- Essential in Indian cooking

Ecological Value:

- Supports specialist insects
- Important food plant for:
 - Small White butterfly (*Pieris rapae*)
 - Large White butterfly (*Pieris brassicae*)
- Honey plant for bees

Etymology: Latin ‘brassica’ (cabbage), ‘nigra’ (black).

Artistic Potential: Culinary history exhibitions, spice trade documentation, sensory installations.

Oxford Ragwort - A fascinating example of recent plant migration and adaptation.

Scientific name: *Senecio squalidus*

Family: Asteraceae

**Railway Ecology:**

- Pioneer of industrial sites
- Adapted to clinker beds
- Spread along transport corridors
- Industrial revolution indicator

Wildlife Associations:

- Cinnabar moth foodplant
- Supports specialist beetles
- Important nectar source
- Seed food for finches

Historical Journey: Native to Mount Etna, Sicily it was introduced to Oxford Botanic Garden 1690s and has spread via railway networks and is now widespread in urban areas.

Etymology: Latin ‘senex’ means ‘old man’.

Artistic Potential: Industrial heritage projects, plant migration mapping, transport history exhibitions.

Broad-leaved Dock - A plant with deep roots in both soil and folklore.

Scientific name: *Rumex obtusifolius*

Family: Polygonaceae

**Traditional Uses:**

- Universal remedy for nettle stings
- Leaves used in wrap cooking
- Seeds once ground for flour
- Root used for yellow dye

Wildlife Value:

- Larval food plant for:
 - Small Copper butterfly
 - Common Blue butterfly
- Seeds important winter bird food
- Supports over 30 species of insect

Folk Beliefs: Carrying dock leaves brings good fortune, traditional cure for skin ailments, associated with patience and time, used in weather forecasting.

Etymology: Latin ‘rumex’ (sorrel), ‘obtusifolius’ means blunt-leaved.

Artistic Potential: Natural dye workshops, folk remedy documentation, butterfly life cycle studies.

Heather- Iconic moorland plant with deep cultural significance in British and Celtic tradition.

Scientific name: *Calluna vulgaris*

Family: Ericaceae

**Cultural Significance:**

- National flower of Norway
- Traditional Scottish clan badge
- Symbol of good luck
- Associated with solitude and shelter

Ecological Value:

- Supports specialist wildlife including:
 - Red Grouse
 - Emperor Moth
 - Heather Beetle
- Key nectar source for bees
- Creates its own ecosystem
- Soil acidifier

Historical Uses: Thatching material, rope making, beer flavouring, bedding material.

Etymology: Greek ‘kalluno’ means ‘to clean or brush’.

Artistic Potential: Moorland landscape studies, traditional craft demonstrations, highland culture exhibitions.

Bur Medick - Named for its distinctive spiral seed pods with hooked spines. This plant has a rich agricultural history as a traditional fodder crop, green manure and pasture species

Scientific name: *Medicago polymorpha*

Family: Fabaceae

**Ecological Value:**

- Nitrogen fixing
- Erosion control
- Bee forage
- Supports soil biodiversity
- Soil improver

Dispersal Mechanisms:

- Seeds attach to animal fur
- Caught in wool and clothing
- Spread through human activity
- Efficient self-seeding

Etymology: ‘Polymorpha’ means ‘many-formed’.

Artistic Potential: Seed dispersal animation, agricultural heritage studies, microscopic pod structure art.

Creeping Thistle - Despite its agricultural pest status, this plant has significant ecological value.

Scientific name: *Cirsium arvense*

Family: Asteraceae

**Wildlife Benefits:**

- Major nectar source for:
 - Bumblebees,
 - Butterflies & Hoverflies
- Seeds favoured by goldfinches
- Dense coverage for small mammals
- Supports over 20 specialist insects

Ecological Impact:

- Deep roots break up soil
- Indicator of fertile ground
- Important pioneer species
- Natural soil improver

Historical Context: National flower of Scotland, medieval symbol of protection, associated with noble character, traditional boundary marker.

Etymology: Greek ‘kirusion’ means swollen vein.

Artistic Potential: National identity exploration, wildlife interaction studies, agricultural history documentation.

Annual Meadow-grass - One of the world's most widespread plants, found on every continent including Antarctica, it's an indicator of human activity.

Scientific name: *Poa annua*

Family: Poaceae



Ecological significance:

- Can complete lifecycle in 6 weeks
- Germinates year-round
- Tolerates extreme conditions
- Important pioneer species
- Thrives in pavement cracks
- Natural soil stabiliser
- Reduces urban heat island effect

Wildlife Value:

- Seeds feed small birds
- Shelter for invertebrates
- Early season pollen source
- Supports soil microorganisms

Etymology: Greek 'poa' means 'fodder'.

Artistic Potential: Urban nature photography, global distribution mapping, adaptive success studies.

Groundsel - A plant whose name derives from Old English 'grundeswylige' meaning 'ground swallower', referring to its rapid spread.

Scientific name: *Senecio vulgaris*

Family: Asteraceae



Ecological Adaptations:

- Can produce 3 generations per year
- Seeds remain viable for years
- Flowers even in winter
- Resistant to many herbicides

Wildlife Value:

- Seeds eaten by finches
- Food plant for:
 - Cinnabar moth caterpillars
 - Various leaf miners
- Winter nectar source

Historical Uses: Traditional feed for cage birds, poultice for skin complaints, used to treat women's ailments, featured in Anglo-Saxon medical texts.

Etymology: Latin "senex" (old man), 'vulgaris' means 'common'.

Artistic Potential: Time-lapse lifecycle studies, Historical medicine documentation, Urban adaptation projects.

Old Man's Beard - Britain's only native clematis species, named for its distinctive fluffy seedheads. Other common names include Traveller's Joy, Smoke Wood, Devil's Threads, Virgin's Bower.

Scientific name: *Clematis vitalba*

Family: Ranunculaceae



Ecological Role:

- Creates woodland edges
- Provides climbing frames for other plants
- Winter shelter for insects
- Nesting material for birds

Traditional Uses:

- Rope making
- Smoking material
- Thatching
- Basket weaving

Etymology: Greek 'klema' means 'vine-branch'.

Artistic Potential: Seed head photography, traditional craft demonstrations, woodland edge studies.

Hairy Bitter-cress - Known for its explosive seed dispersal mechanism.

Scientific name: *Cardamine hirsute*

Family: Brassicaceae



Ecological Adaptations:

- Seeds disperse up to 1 metre
- Can flower year-round
- Completes lifecycle in weeks
- Thrives in disturbed ground

Plant Behaviour:

- Explosive dehiscence
- Thigmotropic responses
- Rapid growth strategy
- Stress tolerance

Traditional Uses: Edible leaves in salads, Vitamin C source, spring tonic, peppery condiment.

Etymology: Greek 'kardamon' (cress), 'hirsuta' means hairy

Artistic Potential: High-speed photography, plant movement studies, urban ecology documentation.

Smooth Sow-thistle - A common but valuable plant with ancient

food uses for humans, pigs and rabbits alike.

Scientific name: *Sonchus oleraceus*

Family: Asteraceae



Wildlife Value:

- Seeds favoured by finches
- Nectar source for hoverflies
- Leaves feed butterfly larvae
- Supports soil invertebrates
- Tap root brings up nutrients

Traditional Medicine:

- Used as a galactagogue (boosts breast milk production)
- Liver tonic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Digestive aid

Etymology: Greek "sonchos" refers to hollow stems. Its common name comes from its popularity with pigs.

Artistic Potential: Foraging documentation, historical food practices, wildlife interaction studies.

American Willowherb - A recent but well-established arrival from North America.

Scientific name: *Epilobium ciliatum*

Family: Onagraceae



Ecological Impact:

- Competes with native willowherbs
- Important butterfly food plant
- Seeds spread by wind
- Pioneer of disturbed ground

Wildlife Associations:

- Elephant Hawk-moth food plant
- Small Elephant Hawk-moth food plant
- Pollinated by hover flies
- Seeds eaten by finches

Colonisation History: First UK record was in 1891 it rapidly spread post-WWII and is now found throughout Britain, particularly successful in gardens.

Etymology: Greek 'epi' (upon) and 'lobos' (pod).

Artistic Potential: Seed dispersal installations, migration mapping, species interaction studies.

Russian Sage - Despite its common name, neither Russian nor a sage, but an important ornamental plant with aromatic foliage that moves in the wind.

Scientific name: *Perovskia atriplicifolia*

Family: Lamiaceae



Wildlife Benefits:

- Major bee attractor
- Butterfly nectar source
- Late season pollinator food
- Shelter for overwintering insects

Garden Value:

- Long flowering period
- Drought tolerant
- Architectural structure
- Winter interest

Etymology: Named after Russian general V.A. Perovsky.

Artistic Potential: Sensory Garden design, movement studies, pollinator observation, sound qualities.

Red Valerian – A colourful, drought-tolerant plant that thrives in cracks and walls.

Scientific name: *Centranthus ruber*

Family: Caprifoliaceae



Ecological Role:

- Supports bees, butterflies, and hoverflies
- Thrives in dry, disturbed soils
- Often naturalised in urban settings
- Spreads by seed and rhizome

Wildlife Associations:

- Nectar source for brimstones and hummingbird hawkmoths
- Can form clumps that support beetles and spiders
- Shelter for small invertebrates at its base
- Associated with railway embankments and walls

Etymology: *Centranthus* means “spurred flower,” *ruber* means red.

Artistic Potential: Wall Garden studies, butterfly-plant interactions, Mediterranean planting inspiration, dry garden design.

Phlomis – A drought-tolerant Mediterranean plant with architectural structure and woolly leaves.

Scientific name: *Phlomis fruticosa* (likely species)

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecological Role:

- Nectar-rich blooms for bees and butterflies
- Provides shelter and overwintering sites for insects
- Structure persists through winter
- Adapted to dry, sunny conditions

Wildlife Associations:

- Visited by bumblebees, especially long-tongued species
- Hollow stems may shelter solitary bees
- Supports biodiversity in dry gardens
- Foliage deters some herbivores

Etymology: From Greek *phlomis*, a name used for mullein-like plants.

Artistic Potential: Winter silhouettes, Mediterranean garden sketches, pollinator-friendly planting plans.

Luzula nivea – A graceful grass-like plant with silvery-white flowers and evergreen tufts.

Scientific name: *Luzula nivea*

Family: Juncaceae



Ecological Role:

- Ground cover in shade or semi-shade
- Tolerates poor, dry soils
- Part of ornamental meadow and woodland gardens
- Contributes to year-round structure

Wildlife Associations:

- Provides habitat for small invertebrates
- May support leaf-mining insects
- Shelter for ground beetles and spiders
- Helps stabilise soil in light shade

Etymology: *Luzula* may derive from Italian *lucciola*, meaning “to shine,” and *nivea* means “snowy” (referring to the flowers).

Artistic Potential: Grasses in movement, texture photography, winter garden structure studies.

Salvia nemorosa – A long-flowering herbaceous perennial loved by bees.

Scientific name: *Salvia nemorosa*

Family: Lamiaceae



Ecological Role:

- High nectar yield for pollinators
- Ideal for wildlife borders and sensory gardens
- Flowers prolifically through summer
- Drought-tolerant and low-maintenance

Wildlife Associations:

- Frequent by bumblebees, honeybees, and hoverflies
- Stems can offer winter shelter for insects
- Caterpillars may feed on foliage
- Encourages pollinator diversity in gardens

Etymology: *Salvia* comes from Latin *salvare*, meaning “to heal”; *nemorosa* means “of the woods.”

Artistic Potential: Bee photography, plant-pollinator pairings, garden palette sketching, sensory garden design.

Agapanthus – A bold, clump-forming perennial with architectural blue or white flowerheads.

Scientific name: *Agapanthus africanus* (commonly cultivated species)

Family: Amaryllidaceae



Ecological Role:

- Drought-tolerant plant for dry urban landscapes
- Summer nectar source
- Container-friendly and low-maintenance
- Minimal competition with native flora when contained

Wildlife Associations:

- Attracts bees and butterflies in summer
- Nectar-rich blooms offer feeding platforms
- Seed heads provide architectural interest into autumn
- Not native, so limited larval associations

Etymology: From Greek *agape* (love) and *anthos* (flower) – “flower of love.”

Artistic Potential: Botanical illustration, garden structure studies, floral silhouettes, blue garden schemes.

2c) The indoor plants of Hove Central

The rubber plant - a glossy-leaved indoor classic with tropical roots.

Scientific name: *Ficus elastica*

Family: Moraceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to Southeast Asia; once tapped for latex
- Common air-purifying houseplant
- Grown for ornamental value and architectural foliage

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- Ficus species support complex fig-wasp relationships in the wild
- In tropical habitats, can become massive canopy trees
- Indoor versions provide calming greenery and microhabitat for tiny invertebrates

Etymology: *Ficus* is Latin for fig; *elastica* refers to its latex-producing qualities.

Artistic Potential: Leaf shape and shine studies, large-scale botanical drawing, houseplant-themed interiors.

The Parlour Palm - a graceful, slow-growing plant beloved since Victorian times.

Scientific name: *Chamaedorea elegans*

Family: Arecaceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to rainforests of Mexico and Guatemala
- One of the most popular indoor palms
- Used for air purification and decorative greenery

Cultural & Wildlife

Associations:

- Once seen as a symbol of refined domesticity
- Non-toxic and pet-safe
- Forms clumps that may shelter small insects indoors

Etymology: *Chamaedorea* means “gift on the ground,” referring to its low-hanging fruits; *elegans* means elegant.

Artistic Potential: Frond pattern sketches, minimalist plant portraits, retro interior still lifes.

The Kentia Palm - elegant, upright and shade-tolerant.

Scientific name: *Howea forsteriana*

Family: Arecaceae



Origins & Uses:

- Endemic to Lord Howe Island, Australia
- A favourite in Victorian palm courts and hotel lobbies
- Low-maintenance and excellent in low light

Cultural & Wildlife

Associations:

- Slow-growing and long-lived
- Helps create a relaxing, resort-like atmosphere
- Non-toxic and pet-safe

Etymology: Named after Lord Howe Island; *forsteriana* honours naturalist Johann Forster.

Artistic Potential: Elegant frond silhouettes, botanical interior décor sketches, historic houseplant illustration.

The Umbrella Plant - known for its radiating leaflets and bushy form.

Scientific name: *Schefflera arboricola*

Family: Araliaceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to Taiwan and Hainan
- Popular houseplant and office greenery
- Used in feng shui and tropical-themed decor

Cultural & Wildlife

Associations:

- May be pruned into bonsai shapes
- Can grow as an epiphyte in the wild
- Appeals to beginner growers for its resilience

Etymology: Named after 19th-century botanist Jacob Scheffler; *arboricola* means “tree-dwelling.”

Artistic Potential: Botanical stylisation, indoor junglescapes, modular leaf pattern studies.

Pothos or Devil's Ivy - a trailing vine with marbled leaves.

Scientific name: *Epipremnum aureum*

Family: Araceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to Mo'orea, French Polynesia
- Famed for air-purifying qualities and hardiness
- Can root easily from cuttings and grow in water

Cultural & Wildlife

Associations:

- Considered lucky or wealth-attracting in some traditions
- Toxic if ingested (especially for pets)
- Forms dense mats in the wild, becoming invasive in some regions

Etymology: *Epipremnum* means “upon the stump” (from its vining nature); *aureum* means “golden,” from its variegation.

Artistic Potential: Trailing composition studies, hydroponic art installations, wall-mounted greenery.

Blushing Philodendron– A dramatic climbing houseplant known for its reddish stems and dark leaves.

Scientific name: *Philodendron erubescens*

Family: Araceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to the rainforests of Colombia
- Grown for its striking foliage, often deep green to burgundy
- Popular in tropical and modern interiors

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- Epiphytic in the wild, growing up trees
- Aroids like this can provide habitat for arboreal insects
- Toxic if ingested – handle with care

Etymology: *Philodendron* means “tree lover” from Greek; *erubescens* means “blushing” – a nod to its red tinge.

Artistic Potential: Leaf studies with colour gradients, jungle-themed murals, stylised botanical prints.

African Fig Tree or Kachere -increasingly popular indoors.

Scientific name: *Ficus cyathistipula*

Family: Moraceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to tropical Africa
- Valued for its lush, shiny foliage and ease of care
- Grows well in bright indoor conditions

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- Wild specimens provide figs for birds and mammals
- Part of the ecologically important fig-wasp cycle
- Indoor plants bring a sense of rainforest calm

Etymology: *Cyathistipula* refers to the cup-like (cyathiform) stipules on the stems.

Artistic Potential: Tropical-themed drawing, sculptural foliage sketches, Ficus species comparison.

Dumb Cane – a plant with lush, variegated leaves and a controversial name.

Scientific name: *Dieffenbachia seguine*

Family: Araceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to tropical Americas
- Grown for bold foliage and upright form
- Tolerant of indoor conditions

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- Toxic sap can irritate or temporarily numb the mouth (hence the name)
- Used in interiors to create leafy backdrops
- Can grow very tall indoors

Etymology: Named after Ernst Dieffenbach, a 19th-century German botanist; *sequine* is from a French planter family.

Artistic Potential: Contrasting leaf pattern studies, cautionary botanical themes, tropical interior photography.

The Dragon Tree – a spiky, stylish and sculptural plant.

Scientific name: *Dracaena reflexa* var. *angustifolia*

Family: Asparagaceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to Madagascar
- Tolerates dry air and poor light
- Architectural favourite for modern homes

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- Linked to air-purifying qualities
- Minimal wildlife value indoors, but provides microclimate interest
- Easy to grow from cuttings

Etymology: *Dracaena* means “female dragon” in Greek, referring to the red resin in some species.

Artistic Potential: Structural sketching, minimalist plant art, contemporary interior styling.

The White Bird of Paradise - bold and exotic with paddle-shaped leaves.

Scientific name: *Strelitzia nicolai*

Family: Strelitziaceae



Origins & Uses:

- Native to South Africa
- Often used as a statement indoor or atrium plant
- Related to the colourful *Strelitzia reginae*

Cultural & Wildlife Associations:

- In the wild, flowers are pollinated by sunbirds
- Can grow tall enough indoors to create a canopy effect
- Large leaves may shelter spiders or scale insects indoors

Etymology: Named in honour of Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz; *nicolai* honours Russian prince Nikolai.

Artistic Potential: Large-scale botanical painting, tropical leaf patterns, interior design centrepiece.

2d) Shrubs & Trees

Purging Buckthorn - A historically significant medicinal plant with complex ecological relationships.

Scientific name: *Rhamnus cathartica*

Family: Rhamnaceae



Wildlife Value:

- Food plant for:
 - Brimstone butterfly
 - Moths
 - Winter birds
- Important nesting habitat

Historical Medicine:

- Traditional purgative
- Medieval remedy
- Dye plant
- Veterinary medicine

Cultural History: Used in medieval manuscript inks, traditional hedging plant, featured in herbals, wood used for turnery.

Etymology: Greek 'rhamnos' (buckthorn), 'cathartica' means 'purging'.

Artistic Potential: Natural ink making, Medieval medicine recreation, butterfly lifecycle studies.

Pyracantha - Common name 'Firethorn' refers to both bright berries and fierce thorns.

Scientific name: *Pyracantha coccinea*

Family: Rosaceae



Ecology:

- Essential winter bird food
- Dense nesting habitat
- Supports pollinating insects
- Good security barrier

Uses:

- Traditional hedge plant
- Berries occasionally used in jelly
- Effective intruder deterrent

Origin: Native to southern Europe and Asia Minor

Lifespan: Can live several decades

Cultural significance: Associated with protection in folklore

Artistic potential: Seasonal colour changes; architectural forms in winter.

English Oak - Britain's national tree, supporting more life forms than any other native tree.

Scientific name: *Quercus robur*

Family: Fagaceae



Ecological Significance:

- Supports over 2,300 species including:
- 326 lichens
 - 324 invertebrates
 - 38 bird species
 - 28 mammals

Traditional Uses:

- Timber construction
- Leather tanning
- Charcoal making
- Medicine (bark)
- Medieval pig forage

Cultural History: Sacred to Druids, used in traditional ship building, a symbol of strength.

Etymology: From Indo-European 'aiks'.

Artistic Potential: Biodiversity documentation, historical reconstruction, time-based installations, community heritage projects.

Sweet Briar - Also known as the Eglantine Rose, this traditional hedgerow plant species is celebrated for its apple-scented leaves.

Scientific name: *Rosa rubiginosa*

Family: Rosaceae (Rose family)



Ecological Value:

- Rich nectar source for bees
- Supports over 150 insect species
- Rose hips vital winter bird food
- Dense thorny growth provides:
 - Nesting sites for birds
 - Shelter for small mammals

Traditional Uses:

- Rose hip syrup (high in Vitamin C)
- Perfumery ingredient
- Hedging material
- Traditional medicine

Historical Significance: Mentioned in Shakespeare's works, featured in medieval poetry, symbol of wounded love in Victorian flower language.

Etymology: 'Rubiginosa' means rusty-coloured.

Artistic Potential: Scent mapping projects, literary garden design, medieval garden reconstruction.

Korean Spice Viburnum - A deciduous shrub renowned for its intensely fragrant flowers.

It has pink buds opening to white, red to black berries and gives a good autumnal display.

Scientific name: *Viburnum carlesii*

Family: Adoxaceae



Wildlife Value:

- Early nectar source
- Berry food for thrushes
- Dense nesting habitat
- Winter shelter

Cultural Significance:

- Traditional Korean garden plant
- Victorian plant hunter introduction
- Named after William R. Carles
- Symbol of spring's arrival

Etymology: Latin 'viburnum' means wayfaring tree, named after botanist William Carles.

Artistic Potential: Scent mapping, seasonal transition studies, cultural exchange gardens.

Wax-leaf Privet - A late-flowering evergreen shrub from China with significant ornamental value.

Scientific name: *Ligustrum quihoui*

Family: Oleaceae



Ecological Role:

- Winter shelter for birds
- Late nectar source
- Berry food for thrushes
- Dense nesting habitat

Garden History:

- Victorian introduction
- Traditional hedge plant
- Formal garden favourite
- Winter structure

Cultural Significance: Symbol of privacy, traditional boundary marker, featured in garden design history, urban planning influence.

Etymology: Latin "ligustrum" (privet), named after botanist Quihou

Artistic Potential: Formal Garden documentation, urban boundary studies, winter garden photography.

Elder - A tree steeped in folklore and practical uses.

Scientific name: *Sambucus nigra*

Family: Adoxaceae



Wildlife Value:

- Supports 67 insect species
- Important bird food source
- Early nectar provider
- Moth caterpillar food

Traditional Uses:

- Wine making
- Dye production (purple)
- Medicinal syrup (cold and flu treatment)
- Musical instruments

Folk Beliefs: Elder Mother spirit guardian, protection against witchcraft, never cut without permission,

Etymology: Anglo-Saxon 'ellen' meaning fire-kindler.

Artistic Potential: Folklore documentation, natural dye workshops, sound installation (elder whistles), medicine making demonstrations.

Butterfly Bush - this Chinese introduction is a wildlife magnet and thrives along railway lines.

Scientific name: *Buddleja davidii*

Family: Scrophulariaceae



Butterfly Associations:

- Attracts 22+ butterfly species
- Major nectar source for:
 - Red Admiral
 - Peacock
 - Small Tortoiseshell
 - Painted Lady

Urban Adaptation:

- Pioneer of bomb sites
- Colonises walls
- Drought tolerant
- Quick establishment

Etymology: Named after two different priests- Adam Buddle and Père David.

Artistic Potential: Urban wildlife corridors, post-war reconstruction, butterfly migration mapping, time-lapse photography.

Field Maple - Britain's only native maple species with distinctive winged fruits and golden autumnal colours.

Scientific name: *Acer campestre*

Family: Sapindaceae



Ecological Significance:

- Ancient woodland indicator
- Supports over 51 insect species
- Important for:
 - Aphids
 - Their predators
 - Lichens
 - Bryophytes

Traditional Uses:

- Wood turning
- Furniture making
- Hedging
- Charcoal production

Etymology: Latin 'acer' meaning 'sharp'.

Artistic Potential: Autumn colour studies, seed photography, woodland edge documentation, traditional craft demonstrations.

Alder - one of our smaller native tree species. They have a light, delicate appearance, with grey bark, flecked with white and can live for 150-200 years.

Scientific name: *Alnus glutinosa*

Family: Betulaceae



Ecological role:

- Nitrogen fixer through root nodules
- Stabilises riverbanks
- Supports over 90 insect species
- Host to unique fungi
- Important for kingfishers and other riverine birds

Cultural significance:

- Celtic tree of resurrection
- Traditional wooden clog material
- Used in Venetian foundation pilings

Interesting facts: Wood turns orange when cut, can grow in standing water, used for smoking foods, wood becomes harder underwater.

Uses: Traditional purple dye, guitar bodies (Fender), water-resistant timber, traditional charcoal for gunpowder.

Etymology: 'Glutinosa' refers to sticky buds, 'Alder' from Old English 'alor'

Artistic Potential: Root system light installation showing nitrogen-fixing nodules, prints using traditional alder-based dyes, sculptural piece showing relationship with water, sustainable charcoal drawing.

Box - An evergreen shrub with significant historical and cultural importance.

Scientific name: *Buxus sp.*



Historical Context:

- Roman garden design
- Medieval monastery gardens
- Tudor knot gardens
- Victorian parterre designs

Traditional Uses:

- Wood engraving blocks
- Mathematical instruments
- Musical instruments
- Topiary art

Family: Buxaceae

Cultural Significance: Symbol of immortality, graveyard plantings, Palm Sunday substitute, featured in Persian gardens.

Etymology: Latin 'buxus' from Greek 'pyxos'.

Artistic Potential: Historical garden reconstruction, topiary documentation, formal design studies, traditional craft demonstrations.

Nashi Pear - Also known as Asian pear or Apple pear, combining characteristics of both fruits.

Scientific name: *Pyrus pyrifolia*



Wildlife Value:

- Early pollinator food
- Bird nesting sites
- Winter fruit for birds
- Moth larval food plant

Growing Pattern:

- Spreading canopy
- Spring blossom display
- Distinctive round fruits
- Autumn leaf colour

Family: Rosaceae

Cultural History: Traditional Asian cultivation, Ancient Chinese medicine, Japanese gift giving, a cultural exchange symbol.

Etymology: Latin 'pyrus' (pear) combined with 'piri' (pear) and 'folia' (leaves).

Artistic Potential: Blossom photography, cultural fusion gardens, food heritage documentation, seasonal transition studies.

River Birch - Distinguished by its peeling, salmon-pink to cinnamon-coloured bark.

Native to Eastern USA wetlands (riversides and floodplains).

Scientific name: *Betula nigra*



Ecological Role:

- Riverbank stabilisation
- Flood tolerance
- Wildlife corridor creation
- Soil improvement

Wildlife Associations:

- Birds use bark for nesting
- Seeds feed winter finches
- Supports numerous moths
- Important for aquatic ecosystems

Family: Betulaceae

Etymology: ‘Betula’ from Celtic, ‘nigra’ means black.

Artistic Potential: Bark texture studies, environmental art installations, habitat reconstruction.

Field Elm - A species devastated by Dutch elm disease but showing signs of resilience.

Scientific name: *Ulmus minor*

Family: Ulmaceae



Wildlife significance:

- White-letter Hairstreak butterfly
- 82 insect species
- Lichen communities
- Bird nesting sites

Disease Impact:

- Dutch elm disease history
- Survival strategies
- Genetic resistance
- Landscape change

Historical Uses: Wheel hubs, coffin boards, water pipes, chair seats.

Artistic Potential: Environmental change documentation, species resilience studies, historical landscape reconstruction.

Toringo Crab Apple - A small ornamental apple from East Asia with significant wildlife value.

Scientific name: *Malus sieboldii*



Wildlife Benefits:

- Early pollinator food
- Bird food source
- Moth larval host
- Winter fruit persistence

Cultural Significance:

- Japanese garden design
- Traditional medicine
- Bonsai subject
- Cultural exchange symbol

Family: Rosaceae

Etymology: Named after Philipp von Siebold.

Artistic Potential: Blossom studies, East-West garden fusion, seasonal photography, miniature garden design.

Japanese Cherry - Celebrated worldwide for its spectacular spring displays with double flowers, autumn colour and winter bark interest.

Scientific name: *Prunus serrulata*



Wildlife Benefits:

- Early nectar source
- Beneficial insect attraction
- Bird nesting sites
- Autumn fruit

Cultural Significance:

- Hanami festivals
- Symbol of renewal
- Life's transience (mono no aware)
- International friendship

Family: Rosaceae

Etymology: "Serrulata" refers to serrated leaf edges.

Artistic Potential: Cultural celebration events, transience exploration, time-lapse photography.

Bird Cherry - A native European tree with significant ecological value.

Scientific name: *Prunus padus*



Wildlife Value:

- Supports 28 moth species
- Early nectar source
- Bird food (cherries)
- Important for:
 - Bird Cherry Ermine moth
 - Brimstone butterfly larvae
 - Early mining bees

Traditional Uses:

- Cabinet making
- Dye production
- Traditional medicine
- Flavouring

Family: Rosaceae

Folk History: Traditional May Day tree, Witchcraft protection, Scandinavian mythology, wedding customs.

Etymology: "Padus" from ancient name of River Po.

Artistic Potential: Moth life cycle studies, folk tradition documentation, natural dye workshops, spring celebration events.

Ecological Role:

- Mast years feed wildlife
- Complex mycorrhizal networks
- Supports numerous species:
 - Black bears
 - Wild turkeys
 - Woodland birds
 - Small mammals

Native Context:

- Eastern North American forests
- Climax species
- Long-lived (300-400 years)
- Important keystone species

American Beech - The North American cousin of the European beech, with distinct ecological characteristics.

Scientific name: *Fagus grandifolia*



Family: Fagaceae

Cultural History: Native American food source, pioneer boundary marker, traditional winter fodder, wood used for railway ties.

Etymology: Latin ‘*fagus*’ (beech), ‘*grandifolia*’ means large-leaved.

Artistic Potential: Forest ecology documentation, root system mapping, woodland community studies, historical landscape reconstruction.

Holly – A hardy evergreen with glossy, spiny leaves and striking red berries, often associated with winter traditions.

Scientific name: *Ilex aquifolium*



Ecological Role:

- Understory habitat provider
- Winter food source for birds
- Shade-tolerant woodland species
- Supports diverse invertebrates

Wildlife Associations:

- Redwings and blackbirds feast on berries
- Holly Blue butterfly caterpillars feed on young leaves
- Provides shelter for hibernating insects
- Thick foliage offers nesting sites for small birds

Family: Aquifoliaceae

Etymology: *Ilex* is Latin for holm oak, referencing its evergreen nature.

Aquifolium means ‘sharp-leaved’.

Artistic Potential: Festive illustrations, wreath-making, folklore-inspired art, seasonal contrasts in photography.

Silver Birch – A graceful tree with white peeling bark, often a pioneer species in regenerating landscapes.

Scientific name: *Betula pendula*

Family: Betulaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Pioneer species in poor soils
- Enhances soil fertility
- Supports diverse fungi communities
- Shelter for woodland regeneration

Wildlife Associations:

- Food source for early pollinators
- Hosts over 300 insect species
- Seeds feed finches and redpolls
- Home to birch polypore fungi

Etymology: *Betula* from Celtic for birch, *pendula* refers to its drooping branches.

Artistic Potential: Bark rubbings, woodland light studies, minimalist winter photography, ink from birch galls.

Hornbeam – A tough, slow-growing tree with distinctive fluted bark and serrated leaves.

Scientific name: *Carpinus betulus*

Family: Betulaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Shade-tolerant woodland species
- Supports dense hedgerows
- Important for soil stability
- Tolerant of heavy pruning

Wildlife Associations:

- Hosts 60+ insect species
- Nut-like seeds feed small mammals
- Foliage is food for moth larvae
- Hedgerow refuges for birds and dormice

Etymology: *Carpinus* from Latin for hornbeam, *betulus* refers to its birch-like appearance.

Artistic Potential: Woodcut printing, leaf vein studies, architectural tree forms, winter silhouette photography.

Sycamore – A fast-growing, resilient tree with large, lobed leaves and distinctive winged seeds.

Scientific name: *Acer pseudoplatanus*

Family: Sapindaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Tolerant of urban pollution
- Provides dense summer shade
- Colonises disturbed land
- Canopy habitat for lichens

Wildlife Associations:

- Nectar-rich flowers for bees
- Seed keys feed squirrels and finches
- Supports aphids, feeding birds and insects
- Shelter for bats in mature trunks

Etymology: *Acer* is Latin for maple, *pseudoplatanus* means 'false plane tree.'

Artistic Potential: Seed helicopter studies, urban nature sketches, canopy light filtering, pollarded forms.

Hazel – A small, multi-stemmed tree, traditionally coppiced for woodcraft and rich in folklore.

Scientific name: *Corylus avellana*

Family: Betulaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Coppiced wood supports biodiversity
- Important component of hedgerows
- Encourages mycorrhizal fungi
- Helps stabilise slopes and banks

Wildlife Associations:

- Catkins provide early pollen for bees
- Nuts are a key food for dormice and jays
- Host plant for the rare Hazel Pot Beetle
- Dense growth offers nesting for birds

Etymology: *Corylus* from Greek ‘korus’ (helmet, referring to nut shell), *avellana* from Avella, Italy.

Artistic Potential: Hazel-wand craft, basket weaving, folklore-inspired storytelling, seasonal foraging photography.

European White Elm – A native elm with elegant, toothed leaves, now less common due to disease.

Scientific name: *Ulmus laevis*

Family: Ulmaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Grows in floodplain forests and riverbanks
- Supports biodiversity in wet woodland areas
- Fast-growing and shade-giving
- More resistant to Dutch elm disease than other elms

Wildlife Associations:

- Food plant for White-letter Hairstreak caterpillars
- Supports over 80 species of insect
- Nesting and roosting site for birds
- Leaf litter feeds soil invertebrates

Etymology: *Ulmus* is Latin for elm; *laevis* means “smooth,” referring to the bark.

Artistic Potential: Conservation storytelling, elm disease awareness, leaf rubbings, botanical resilience themes.

Liquidambar or Sweet Gum Tree– A striking deciduous tree known for its star-shaped leaves and vivid autumn colour.

Scientific name: *Liquidambar styraciflua*

Family: Altingiaceae

**Ecological Role:**

- Supports pollinators and leaf litter insects
- Shade and shelter provider
- Long-lived urban tree
- Introduced ornamental species

Wildlife Associations:

- Seeds eaten by birds and squirrels
- Leaf litter supports soil organisms
- Hosts aphids and scale insects, feeding birds
- Trunk may provide bat roosting cavities over time

Etymology: *Liquidambar* means “liquid amber,” referring to its fragrant resin. *Styraciflua* means “flowing with styrax.”

Artistic Potential: Autumn colour studies, bark texture rubbings, seasonal leaf prints, urban tree photography.

Japanese Holly – A compact evergreen often used as a box substitute in formal hedging.

Scientific name: *Ilex crenata*

Family: Aquifoliaceae



Ecological Role:

- Evergreen structure for shelter and nesting
- Resilient in urban conditions
- Alternative to box hedging (resistant to box blight)
- Tolerates clipping and shaping

Wildlife Associations:

- Provides winter cover for birds
- Potential nectar source for early pollinators
- Slow growing, so not as rich for wildlife as native holly
- Fruits can attract birds in leaner seasons

Etymology: *Ilex* was the Latin name for holm oak, later transferred to hollies; *crenata* refers to its scalloped leaf edges.

Artistic Potential: Topiary inspiration, evergreen texture studies, garden design contrasts.

Crimson Fringe – A striking shrub with deep burgundy leaves and ribbon-like flowers.

Scientific name: *Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*

Family: Hamamelidaceae



Ecological Role:

- Ornamental value in mixed planting
- Early spring nectar source
- Grows well in containers and borders
- Tolerant of urban conditions

Wildlife Associations:

- Attracts early bees and hoverflies
- Provides structural shelter for insects
- Buds and flowers may support specialist beetles
- Little direct value for UK wildlife compared to natives

Etymology: *Loropetalum* means “strap petal” (from Greek); *chinense* means Chinese origin; *rubrum* means red.

Artistic Potential: Colour-themed planting, floral macro photography, East Asian Garden inspiration.

3. Animals

3a) Animals with zero Legs

Earthworm – Known as 'ecosystem engineers', with a lifespan of 4-8 years and native to Europe, these are now found worldwide and are related to other annelids including medicinal leeches and marine bristle worms.

Common names: Common earthworm, Nightcrawler, Dew worm, Lob worm.

Scientific name: *Lumbricus terrestris*

Family: Lumbricidae



Ecological roles:

- Create soil channels improving drainage and aeration
- Break down organic matter and increase soil fertility
- Support plant growth through nutrient cycling
- Provide food for birds, hedgehogs, and other wildlife

Interesting facts:

- Can regenerate lost segments
- Possess five hearts
- Surface at night to mate, hence 'nightcrawler'
- Process up to 36 tonnes of soil per hectare annually

Cultural significance: Symbol of transformation in many cultures. Featured in Darwin's last published work on their role in soil formation. Declared sacred by Cleopatra.

Common Garden Snail - Related to Roman snails and grove snails, these have their origins in the Mediterranean, now worldwide. They have a lifespan of 2-3 years.

Common names: Brown Garden snail, European brown snail

Scientific name: *Cornu aspersum*

Family: Helicidae

Ecological role:



Interesting facts:

- Decomposer of plant material
- Food source for thrushes, hedgehogs
- Shell provides calcium source when degraded
- Can hibernate for up to 4 months
- Hermaphroditic but requires mate
- Can rebuild damaged shells
- Used in cosmetic treatments

Cultural significance: Culinary importance (escargot), symbolic of slow but steady progress.

Three-banded Garden slug, Valencia slug - Mature specimens have a translucent, watery appearance with a keel at the tip of the body, a dark stripe along the body and colourless slime.

Scientific name: *Lehmannia valentiana* (also known as *Ambigolimax valentianus*)

Family: Limacidae



Ecological role:

- Decomposer of organic matter
- Food source for hedgehogs and some birds

Interesting facts:

- Can follow their own slime trails back home
- Active primarily at night
- Can detect and avoid copper

Status: Invasive in UK

Origin: Iberian Peninsula

Black Slug, Black Arion, European Black Slug – a common slug decomposes organic matter, preying on other organisms, and consuming vegetative matter including agricultural crops.

Scientific name: *Arion ater*

Family: Arionidae



Ecological role:

- Important decomposer
- Indicator species for woodland health

Interesting facts:

- Changes colour with age and habitat
- Can stretch to 15 times their resting length
- Used historically in folk medicine for warts

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Lifespan: 1-2 years

3b) Animals with 2 Legs (birds)

Eurasian Jay (Jay, European Jay)- a colourful crow cousin widely distributed throughout Europe and Asia. It is a mostly temperate species that lives in forested areas and near human settlements.

Scientific name: *Garrulus glandarius*

Family: Corvidae



Ecological role:

- Key oak forest regenerator
- Caches thousands of acorns annually
- Controls insect populations

Interesting facts:

- Can mimic other birds and sounds
- Has specialized throat pouch for carrying acorns
- Known as the 'woodland watchman'

Origin: Native to UK and Eurasia

Lifespan: 7-15 years

Cultural significance: Associated with prophecy in Celtic mythology, Symbol of communication and intelligence.

Carrion Crow (Crow, European Crow) - a uniformly black bird, averaging 47 cm in length. In certain light, its feathers appear glossy.

Scientific name: *Corvus corone*

Family: Corvidae



Ecological role:

- Scavenger maintaining ecosystem health
- Pest control of insects and small rodents
- Seed dispersal

Interesting facts:

- Can use tools
- Recognise human faces
- Form strong pair bonds
- Can count up to 8

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Lifespan: 10-15 years

Cultural significance: Associated with wisdom and prophecy. Featured in numerous folklore tales.

European Herring Gull (also known as Sea Gull)

Scientific name: *Larus argentatus*

Family: Laridae



Ecological role:

- Scavenger in urban and coastal environments
- Indicator species for marine ecosystem health

Interesting facts:

- Can drink salt water
- Takes 4 years to reach adult plumage
- Can sleep with one eye open
- Protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Origin: Native to UK

Lifespan: 20-30 years

Cultural significance: Symbol of coastal life; Featured in maritime literature.

Common Wood Pigeon

Scientific name : *Columba palumbus*

Family: Columbidae



Ecological role:

- Important seed disperser
- Food source for raptors
- Pollinator through seed transport

Interesting facts:

- Only European pigeon with white neck patch
- Can store food in crop for later digestion
- Produces 'crop milk' for young

Lifespan: 3-6 years

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Cultural significance: Symbol of peace; Traditional game bird.

Magpie (Eurasian Magpie, Common Magpie, Pie (archaic))

Scientific name: *Pica pica*

Family: Corvidae



Ecological role:

- Omnivorous scavenger
- Pest control through insect consumption
- Seed disperser
- Nest provider (old nests used by owls)

Interesting facts:

- One of few animals to pass mirror self-recognition test
- Forms teenager-like social groups
- Holds 'funerals' for dead magpies
- Mates for life
- Can count up to 8

Origin: Native to UK

Lifespan: 15 years average

Cultural significance: Subject of numerous superstitions, One for sorrow, two for joy rhyme, Symbol of intelligence, Associated with theft in folklore.

Etymology: 'Mag' from Margaret (historical nickname), 'Pie' from Latin 'pica' (pointed).

European Robin (Robin Redbreast, Ruddock (archaic))

Scientific name: *Erythacus rubecula*

Family: Muscicapidae



Ecological role:

- Insect controller
- Berry disperser
- Indicator species for garden health
- Ground-feeding insectivore

Interesting facts:

- Males and females look identical
- Highly territorial year-round
- Sings at night in lit areas
- Can recognize human faces

Origin: Native to UK

Lifespan: 2 years average, record 19 years

Cultural significance: Britain's national bird, Associated with Christmas, Featured on postage stamps, Symbol of departed souls in folklore, Will attack their own reflection.

Etymology: 'Robin' from medieval nickname 'Robert', 'Rubecula' means reddish in Latin.

Blue Tit (Eurasian Blue Tit, Blue Bonnet (Scotland))

Scientific name: *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common names:

Family: Paridae



Ecological role:

- Major predator of leaf-mining moths
- Garden pest control (estimated 50 billion insects/year in UK)
- Pollinator through foraging activity
- Key indicator species for woodland health

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Interesting facts:

- Can remember food locations for 6 months
- Feeds upside down
- Each chick needs 100 caterpillars per day
- Males feed females during nesting
- Brain grows larger in winter for food location memory

Lifespan: 3 years average, record 21 years

Cultural significance: Famous for learning to pierce milk bottle tops (1921 onwards), Featured on many Christmas cards, Symbol of British garden birds.

Behaviour: Forms winter feeding flocks, highly acrobatic, Shows tool-using behaviour, Excellent problem-solver.

House Sparrow – A sociable and familiar bird, often found in close association with humans.

Scientific name: *Passer domesticus*

Family: Passeridae



Ecological Role:

- Scavenger and seed disperser
- Part of urban food chains
- Nest builder in crevices and buildings
- Indicator of urban biodiversity

Wildlife Associations:

- Predated by sparrowhawks and domestic cats
- Nests attract parasites such as mites and fleas
- Feeds on insects, grains, and kitchen scraps
- Forms communal roosts in dense hedges or buildings

Etymology: *Passer* means “sparrow” in Latin; *domesticus* refers to its domestic, human-associated habitat.

Artistic Potential: Urban wildlife photography, citizen science storytelling, birdwatching records, species decline awareness.

Wren – A tiny bird with a loud song, often seen darting through undergrowth.

Scientific name: *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Family: Troglodytidae



Ecological Role:

- Feeds on insects and spiders
- Important insect population regulator
- Forages low in dense vegetation
- Nests in tree hollows and sheltered spots

Wildlife Associations:

- Attracts predatory birds and mammals
- Often nests in old garden equipment or ivy
- Forms communal roosts in winter
- Very sensitive to cold weather

Etymology: From Greek *troglodytes* meaning “cave dweller,” referring to its hidden nesting habits.

Artistic Potential: Birdsong-inspired compositions, folklore themes, tiny nest photography, garden birdwatching illustrations.

3c) Animals with 4 Legs

European Hedgehog

Scientific name: *Erinaceus europaeus*

Family: Erinaceidae



Ecological role:

- Controls invertebrate populations
- Indicator species for habitat health

Interesting facts:

- Has approximately 6,000 spines
- Can travel up to 2km per night
- Hibernates through winter
- Ancient Roman name 'urchin' still used

Conservation status:

Vulnerable in UK

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Lifespan: 2-5 years

Cultural significance: Featured in children's literature, Symbol of garden wildlife.

Red Fox

Scientific name: *Vulpes vulpes*



Ecological role:

- Controls rodent populations
- Seed disperser through scat
- Scavenger maintaining ecosystem health

Interesting facts:

- Can hear rodents underground
- Makes over 40 different sounds
- Most widespread wild carnivore globally

Origin: Native to UK

Lifespan: 2-5 years in wild

Family: Canidae

Cultural significance: Featured prominently in folklore worldwide, Symbol of cunning and adaptability.

Brown Rat (Norway Rat, Common Rat, Street Rat)

Scientific name: *Rattus norvegicus*



Ecological role:

- Food source for predators
- Seed and spore dispersal

Status: Invasive

Interesting facts:

- Can swim for 3 days
- Highly intelligent and empathetic
- Cannot vomit
- First mammal sent into space

Lifespan: 1-2 years

Origin: Native to China, introduced to UK

Family: Muridae

Cultural significance: Important laboratory animal, associated with urban development.

Wood Mouse

Scientific name: *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Family: Muridae **Cultural significance:** Featured in children's literature, traditional countryside species.



Ecological role:

- Important seed disperser
- Key prey species
- Aids in mycorrhizal fungi dispersal

Origin: Native to UK

Interesting facts:

- Can leap over 50cm high
- Stores seeds in underground larders
- Excellent climber
- Travels up to 400m nightly

Lifespan: 1-2 years

Common Pipistrelle – One of the UK's smallest and most frequently seen bats.

Scientific name: *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Family: Vespertilionidae

**Ecological Role:**

- Major consumer of midges, mosquitoes, and flying insects
- Indicator of healthy insect populations
- Uses echolocation to navigate and hunt
- Forages around hedgerows, trees, and buildings

Wildlife Associations:

- Roosts in tree holes, buildings, or bat boxes
- Feeds over gardens, parks, and wetlands
- Potential prey for owls and sparrowhawks
- Sensitive to artificial lighting

Etymology: *Pipistrellus* is Latin for "bat" and may come from "pipare" – to squeak or chirp.

Artistic Potential: Sound visualisation projects, nocturnal wildlife photography, silhouette art, urban wildlife illustration.

3d) Animals with 6 legs

Springtails

Scientific name: numerous

Family: Collembola (their own class, separate from insects)

**Ecological Role:**

- Critical decomposers of organic matter
- Food source for predatory mites and small beetles
- Indicators of soil health

Interesting Facts:

- Can survive being frozen solid
- Some species can walk on water
- Have existed for at least 400 million years
- Can reach densities of 100,000 per cubic metre of soil

Origin: Worldwide, including UK native species

These microscopic soil-dwellers are among Earth's most abundant hexapods. Despite looking like insects, they form their own distinct class of arthropods. Their common name comes from their remarkable ability to catapult themselves through the air using a spring-loaded tail called a furcula.

Green Shield Bug - This distinctive bright green bug changes to bronze in autumn to match falling leaves, demonstrating remarkable seasonal camouflage.

Scientific name: *Palomena prasina*

Family: Pentatomidae

Origin: Native to Europe

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Known as "stink bugs" due to their defensive chemicals, sometimes called "green bishops" due to their shield-like shape, featured in children's books about garden wildlife.



Ecological Role:

- Plant sap feeder
- Prey for birds and parasitic wasps
- Seed and fruit disperser

Interesting Facts:

- Changes colour twice yearly
- Maternal care of eggs and young nymphs
- Can live for up to one year
- Releases a pungent smell when disturbed

Common Housefly - One of humanity's oldest companions, the housefly has spread globally with human settlements.

Scientific name: *Musca domestica*

Family: Muscidae

Origin: Believed to have originated in the Middle East



Ecological Role:

- Decomposer of organic matter
- Pollinator of some plants
- Food source for birds, spiders, and other predators

Scientific Significance:

- Model organism in genetic research
- Important in forensic science
- Study subject for flight mechanics

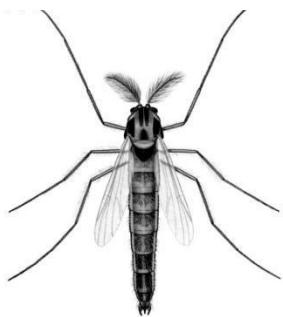
Folklore & Cultural Significance: Associated with uncleanliness in many cultures, featured in numerous idioms ('fly on the wall'), symbolic of persistence and annoyance.

Gnats - These small flies often form dancing clouds at dusk, performing complex mating displays.

Scientific name: Various species including Chironomidae

Family: Various families within Diptera

Origin: Worldwide distribution



Ecological Role:

- Important food source for bats and birds
- Aquatic larvae help process organic matter
- Some species are pollinators

Interesting Facts:

- Some species' larvae can survive near freezing
- Many don't feed as adults
- Some species' larvae produce silk
- Can synchronise their swarm movements

Green Leafhopper - These vibrant insects are among the most successful groups on Earth, with over 20,000 known species.

Scientific name: *Cicadella viridis*

Family: Cicadellidae

Origin: Native to Europe and Asia



Ecological Role:

- Plant sap feeder
- Food source for birds and spiders
- Vector for some plant nutrients

Interesting Facts:

- Can jump 100 times their body length
- Communicate through substrate vibrations
- Some species feed exclusively on one plant species
- Nymphs produce protective foam

Scientific Significance: Study subject for jumping mechanics, Research into plant-insect relationships, Model for biomechanical engineering.

Bumblebee - These charismatic insects are critical pollinators and have captured human imagination for centuries.

Scientific name: *Bombus* sp.

Family: Apidae

Origin: Native to UK and Northern Hemisphere



Ecological Role:

- Key pollinators of wildflowers and crops
- Create nest habitats used by other species
- Important indicator species for ecosystem health

Interesting Facts:

- Can see ultraviolet patterns
- Can fly in temperatures near freezing
- Colonies have unique "personalities"
- Some species can recognise human faces
- Bumblebee venom is studied for anti-inflammatory properties.

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Symbolise industry and community, Featured in children's literature and art, Named "humble-bee" by Shakespeare, Associated with summer and garden abundance.

Etymology: *Bombus* is Latin for a buzzing or humming sound.

Leaf Cutter Bee - These remarkable solitary bees are master craftswomen, cutting perfectly circular pieces from leaves to construct their nest cells.

Scientific name: *Megachile* sp.

Family: Megachilidae

Origin: Worldwide distribution, including native UK species



Ecological Role:

- Excellent pollinators, especially of legumes
- Create habitat niches through leaf cutting
- Important crop pollinators, particularly for alfalfa

Interesting Facts:

- Females cut leaves with mathematical precision
- Carry pollen on their bellies, not legs
- Can cut perfect circles from leaves in under 30 seconds
- Some species use flower petals instead of leaves

Scientific Significance: Study subjects for precision cutting behaviour, Research into solitary bee conservation, Models for sustainable pollination systems.

Honey Bee - Perhaps humanity's most important insect partner, honeybees have been cultivated for at least 9,000 years.

Scientific name: *Apis mellifera*

Family: Apidae

Origin: Originally from Europe, Africa, and Asia



Ecological Role:

- Critical agricultural pollinators
- Producers of honey, wax, and propolis
- Support vast networks of associated species

Interesting Facts:

- Dance to communicate flower locations
- Maintain hive temperature within 1°C
- Can recognise human faces
- Make decisions democratically when swarming
- Venom used in apitherapy

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Sacred in many ancient cultures, Symbol of immortality in Egyptian mythology, Featured on Napoleon's coat of arms, Traditional symbol of industry and cooperation, Honey used medicinally for thousands of years.

Hoverfly - These beneficial insects are masters of mimicry, often resembling wasps or bees while being completely harmless.

Scientific name: *Eupeodes* sp.

Family: Syrphidae

Origin: Worldwide distribution

Ecological Role:



Interesting Facts:

- Both pollinator and pest controller
- Larvae eat aphids and other soft-bodied insects
- Adults are important flower pollinators
- Can hover perfectly still
- Some species migrate long distances
- Larvae are voracious aphid predators
- Adults can fly backwards

Scientific Significance: Study subjects for mimicry evolution, Important in biological pest control, Research subjects for flight mechanics.

Drone Fly - This remarkable honeybee mimic has a fascinating lifecycle that spans both aquatic and terrestrial environments.

Scientific name: *Eristalis tenax*

Family: Syrphidae

Origin: Worldwide distribution

Ecological Role:



Interesting Facts:

- Important pollinator of many plants
- Larvae help clean stagnant water
- Indicator species for wetland health

- Larvae known as "rat-tailed maggots"
- Can breathe underwater through telescopic tube
- One of the best bee mimics
- Active even in cold weather

Scientific Significance: Study subject for pollution tolerance, Research into aquatic oxygen adaptation, Model organism for mimicry studies.

Mosquito - Despite their notorious reputation, mosquitoes play crucial ecological roles and show remarkable adaptations.

Scientific name: (Various species)

Family: Culicidae

Origin: Worldwide distribution

Ecological Role:



Interesting Facts:

- Food source for bats, birds, and fish
- Pollinators of some plants
- Larvae filter water and recycle nutrients

- Only females bite
- Can detect CO₂ from 75 feet away
- Wings beat up to 500 times per second
- Some species hibernate

Scientific Significance: Important in disease research, Study subjects for flight mechanics, Research into blood-feeding adaptation.

Red Admiral Butterfly - This striking butterfly is one of Britain's most recognisable insects, known for its territorial behaviour and remarkable migration.

Scientific name: *Vanessa Atalanta*

Family: Nymphalidae

Origin: Native to Europe, North America, and Asia

Ecological Role:

- Pollinator of various flowers
- Caterpillars feed on nettles
- Part of complex food webs



Interesting Facts:

- Can migrate hundreds of miles
- Territorial males 'dogfight' with rivals
- Overwinters as adult in mild years
- Can remember feeding locations

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Traditional symbol of transformation, Featured in many paintings and poetry, Name possibly derived from "admirable", Associated with souls in some cultures.

Painted Lady Butterfly - One of nature's most remarkable travellers, this butterfly makes multi-generational migrations spanning continents.

Scientific name: *Vanessa cardui*

Family: Nymphalidae

Origin: Most widespread butterfly in the world; migratory

Ecological Role:

- Long-distance pollinator
- Caterpillars control thistle populations
- Part of transcontinental food webs



Interesting Facts:

- Can fly at 30 mph
- Reaches altitudes of 3,000 feet during migration
- Makes annual round trips of up to 9,000 miles
- Each migration involves up to six generations

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Named 'thistle butterfly' in many languages, Symbol of freedom and wanderlust, Featured in migration studies and citizen science, Associated with global connectivity.

Meadow Brown Butterfly - Britain's most abundant butterfly, demonstrating that beauty exists in the common and overlooked.

Scientific name: *Maniola jurtina*

Family: Nymphalidae

Origin: Native to Europe

Ecological Role:

- Grassland pollinator
- Indicator species for meadow health
- Caterpillars feed on various grasses



Interesting Facts:

- Shows remarkable variability in spotting patterns
- Males and females look distinctly different
- Can fly in cloudy conditions
- Lives in colonies that persist for many generations

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Traditional symbol of English meadowlands, Featured in pastoral poetry, name 'jurtina' from ancient Roman mythology, Represents the beauty of the ordinary.

Brimstone Butterfly – A vivid yellow butterfly often considered the first sign of spring.

Scientific name: *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Family: Pieridae



Ecological Role:

- Pollinator of spring flowers
- Indicator of healthy hedgerows
- Overwinters as an adult
- Host plants: buckthorn and alder buckthorn

Wildlife Associations:

- Predated by birds and spiders
- Frequent visitor to gardens with nectar-rich plants
- One of the longest-living UK butterflies (up to a year)
- Benefits from native shrub planting

Etymology: *Gonepteryx* means “angled wing,” *rhamni* refers to its buckthorn host plants.

Cabbage White Butterfly – A familiar garden visitor with a fluttering flight and love of brassicas.

Scientific name: *Pieris rapae* (Small), *Pieris brassicae* (Large)

Family: Pieridae



Ecological Role:

- Pollinators of garden flowers
- Host plants: cabbages and other brassicas
- Part of garden food webs
- Multiple broods per year

Wildlife Associations:

- Preyed on by birds, spiders, and parasitic wasps
- Attracts attention of children and gardeners alike
- Caterpillars feed in groups
- Seen in parks, gardens, and allotments

Etymology: *Pieris* refers to Pieria, a region sacred to the Muses; *rapae* and *brassicae* refer to food plants.

Artistic Potential: Life cycle illustrations, nature journaling, citizen science studies of urban biodiversity.

Brimstone Moth – A bright yellow, day- or night-flying moth often mistaken for a butterfly.

Scientific name: *Opisthograptis luteolata*

Family: Geometridae



Ecological Role:

- Larvae feed on hawthorn, blackthorn, and other shrubs
- Part of the food web for bats, birds, and parasitoid wasps
- Active in spring and summer – sometimes into autumn
- A helpful indicator of plant diversity

Wildlife Associations:

- Mimics fallen leaves when resting
- Attracts predators as part of natural cycles
- Supports biodiversity in hedgerows and gardens
- Larvae are “loopers” – they move in a distinctive inchworm motion

Etymology: *Opisthograptis* refers to the shape of the wing margins; *luteolata* means "yellowish."

Artistic Potential: Colour palette inspiration, nature journaling, camouflage studies, moth-focused printmaking.

Common Wasp - These social insects are master paper-makers and skilled predators, playing crucial roles in ecosystem balance.

Scientific name: *Vespula vulgaris*

Family: Vespidae

Origin: Native to Eurasia



Ecological Role:

- Predator of many pest species
- Pollinator of late summer flowers
- Scavenger of carrion
- Nest provides habitat for other insects

Interesting Facts:

- Makes paper by chewing wood
- Colonies have unique facial patterns
- Can remember and recognise human faces
- Nests contain multiple layers of combs

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Symbol of organisation and industry, Featured in many cultural warnings, Name derived from Anglo-Saxon ‘waeps’, Traditional indicator of weather changes.

Pine Ladybird - This specialist predator is adapted to life in coniferous trees, controlling scale insects and aphids.

Scientific name: *Exochomus quadripustulatus*

Family: Coccinellidae **Origin:** Native to Europe

Ecological Role:

- Predator of scale insects
- Indicator species for conifer health
- Winter shelter for other invertebrates

Interesting Facts:

- Active throughout winter
- More angular shape than most ladybirds
- Larvae mimic lizard droppings



- Adults can live for two years

Scientific Significance: Study subject for biological control, Research into habitat specialisation, Indicator of climate change effects.

Harlequin Ladybird - This controversial arrival demonstrates the complex challenges of biological control and invasive species.

Scientific name: *Harmonia axyridis* **Family:** Coccinellidae **Origin:** Native to Asia; invasive in UK



Ecological Role:

- Voracious aphid predator
- Competitor with native ladybirds
- Winter shelter species in buildings

Interesting Facts:

- Extremely variable in colour and pattern
- Can produce defensive alkaloids
- Originally introduced for pest control
- Forms large winter aggregations

Scientific Significance: Study subject for invasion biology, Research into species competition, Model for adaptation studies

18-spot Ladybird (Pine Ladybird)

Scientific name: *Myrrha octodecimguttata*

Family: Coccinellidae **Origin:** Native to UK **Lifespan:** 1-2 years



Ecological Role:

- Aphid predator
- Indicator species for pine woodland health
- Part of complex predator-prey relationships
- Impacted by invasive Harlequin Ladybird

Interesting Facts:

- Specialist of pine trees
- Overwinters in pine needle litter
- Pattern unique to each individual
- Can secrete defensive chemicals

Cultural significance: Less well-known than 7-spot species, Part of ladybird folklore tradition.

3e) Animals with 8 legs

Tiny Spiders (Various species) - These small but numerous arachnids form a crucial part of the microscopic ecosystem

Families: Likely including Linyphiidae (Money Spiders), Theridiidae (Cobweb Spiders), and others
Origin: Various, many native to UK



Ecological Role:

- Control of small insects and invertebrates
- Food source for larger predators
- Create microhabitats with their webs
- Some species help control agricultural pests

Interesting Facts:

- Some can "balloon" on silk threads to disperse
- Many are smaller than a matchhead
- Some build webs between soil particles
- Can survive in almost any terrestrial habitat
- Some species hunt underwater in air bubbles

Folklore & Cultural Significance: Money spiders believed to bring wealth, featured in miniature photography, Important in children's introduction to nature, Used in studies of urban biodiversity.

Common Garden Spider - Also known as the European Garden Spider, Cross Spider, or Diadem Spider, this arachnid creates some of the most perfect geometric webs in nature.

Scientific name: *Araneus diadematus*

Family: Araneidae (Orb Weavers)

Origin: Native to Europe and North America



Ecological Role:

- Controls flying insect populations
- Web silk provides nesting material for birds
- Creates microhabitats used by other invertebrates
- Part of complex food webs involving birds and larger insects

Interesting Facts:

- Rebuilds its web every day
- Can produce seven different types of silk
- Females can detect web vibrations from 5 metres away
- Web threads can stretch up to 30% without breaking
- Lives for approximately one year
- Can remember successful hunting strategies

Cultural significance: Featured in 'Charlotte's Web', Associated with prophecy in European folklore, Name 'diadematus' refers to the cross pattern on its back, Traditional weather predictor: complex webs suggest good weather, Symbol of patience and persistence in many cultures.

Soil Mites (various species) - These microscopic arachnids are essential decomposers and soil engineers, with thousands of species present in every handful of healthy soil.

Class: Arachnida

Subclass: Acari

Origin: Worldwide distribution, many native species



Ecological Role:

- Primary decomposers of organic matter
- Soil structure engineers
- Indicators of soil health
- Dispersers of fungal spores
- Controllers of soil nematode populations

Interesting Facts:

- Can survive extreme environments
- Some species are parasitic
- Others are predatory
- Can live for several years
- Densities can reach millions per square metre
- Some species farm fungi
- Show complex social behaviours

Scientific Significance: Vital in soil ecology studies, Indicators of environmental change, Used in forensic science, Important in composting research, Study subjects for symbiosis.

3f) Animals with 14 legs

Common Woodlouse (Slater, Pill Bug, Roly-poly, Cheeselog (Berkshire), Chucky, Gramersow)

Scientific name: *Oniscus asellus*

Family: Oniscidae

Origin: Native to UK and Europe

Lifespan: 2-3 years



Ecological Role:

- Key decomposer of dead plant material
- Soil improver through waste production
- Food source for shrews, centipedes, and spiders
- Indicator species for soil health

Interesting Facts:

- Crustacean related to crabs and shrimp
- Breathes through gills
- Females carry eggs in brood pouch
- Can drink through both ends of body
- Changes colour when ready to moult
- One of few crustaceans fully adapted to land
- Can survive being frozen

Cultural significance: Traditional children's entertainment (rolling into balls), Featured in folklore as weather predictors, Historical medicinal use for stomach aches.

3g) Animals with many legs

Greenhouse Millipede (Hothouse Millipede, Garden Millipede, Asian Greenhouse Millipede)

Scientific name: *Oxidus gracilis*

Family: Paradoxosomatidae

Origin: Southeast Asia, now cosmopolitan

Lifespan: 1-2 years

Ecological Role:

- Decomposer of plant matter
- Soil structure improver
- Indicator species for soil moisture
- Contributes to humus formation



Interesting Facts:

- All-female populations exist in some areas
- Can reproduce parthenogenetically
- Produces defensive chemicals when disturbed
- Has approximately 40 body segments
- Changes colour with age
- Cannot survive freezing temperatures

Cultural significance: Important in Asian agricultural traditions,

Considered beneficial in greenhouse cultivation.

Appendix 1.

The Hidden World Beneath Our Feet: Soil at MODA, Hove Central

Soil is often overlooked, yet it is the foundation of all life on land. It's a bustling, unseen ecosystem that supports plants, fungi, and countless tiny creatures. Healthy soil is full of life, with a balance of bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and nematodes working together to recycle nutrients, store carbon, and support plant growth. But not all soils are the same! By examining the life within our soil at MODA, we can understand how it functions and what we might do to improve it. A sample was sent to Perry Haldenby of *Soil Redemption* for analysis...

What Did We Find in the MODA Soil?

- **Bacteria-dominated soil:** The sample showed a very high bacterial biomass but almost no fungi. This means our soil is in an early stage of succession, similar to what you'd find in grasslands or areas recovering from disturbance. Healthy, balanced soils for trees and shrubs usually have a mix of both bacteria and fungi.
- **Fungal absence:** Ideally, soil should have some fungi to help break down organic matter and create stable nutrients for plants. The complete lack of measurable fungi suggests that the soil may not be supporting deeper-rooted plants and trees as well as it could.
- **Good bacteria but missing the full ecosystem:** While beneficial bacteria were abundant, other essential microorganisms such as protozoa (which help cycle nutrients) and beneficial fungi were missing. Some fungal hyphae and an amoeba were observed, but not in enough quantity to make a significant impact.
- **Nematodes present:** Some bacterial-feeding nematodes were found, which is good! These tiny worms help keep bacterial populations in check and contribute to nutrient cycling. However, fungal-feeding nematodes, which would indicate a more balanced soil ecosystem, were absent.
- **No harmful organisms:** The good news is that no harmful root-feeding nematodes, disease-causing fungi (like Oomycetes), or low-oxygen indicators (like ciliates) were found. This suggests that the soil is not suffering from major microbial imbalances.

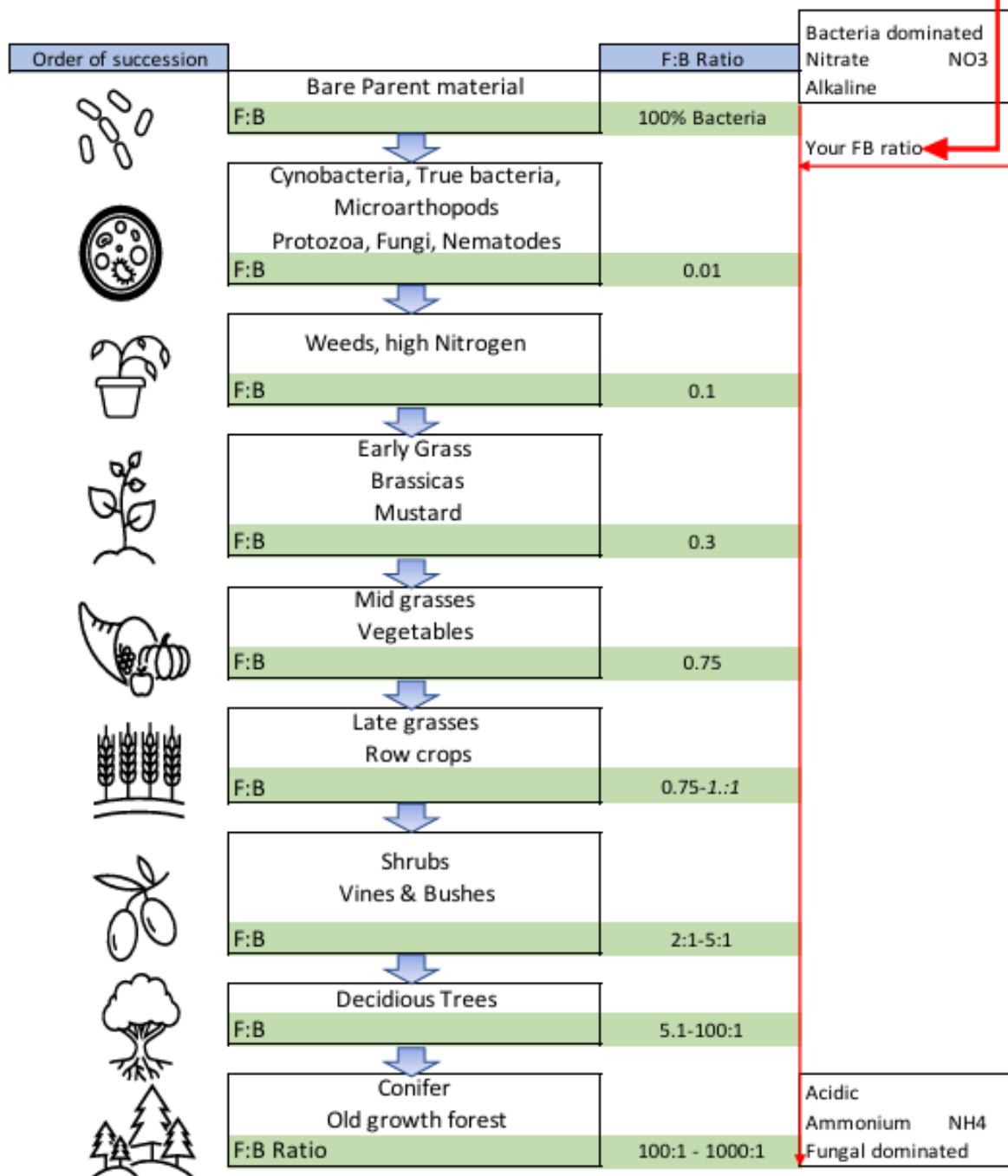
What Does This Mean for MODA's Green Spaces?

Since the soil is bacteria-dominated and low in fungi, it is likely to favour fast-growing plants such as grasses and weeds over trees and shrubs. If we want to create richer, more biodiverse green spaces that support a variety of plants, animals, and fungi, we could consider ways to encourage more fungi and beneficial microbes. This could be done by adding compost, mulch, or introducing fungal-rich materials like leaf litter and wood chips.

Soil health is an ongoing story, and even slight changes can help create a more thriving habitat for all of our wild neighbours at MODA—above and below ground.

Your
MODA soil
sample

Fungus to Bacteria Succession Chart



The pictorial chart above demonstrates the natural succession of plants, from bare soil to old growth forests.

As the succession changes over time, the fungus to bacteria ratios also change. The result of your FB ratio can help you see at what conditions the FB in your soil are promoting