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a wildlife haven

Posted in *All posts* on 6th October 2014

When I first acquired my allotment I knew straight away that I wanted to grow flowers, not only for the bees but for my enjoyment as well. Back then I would have never have imagined how much wildlife my little plot was going to attract, a year down the line and I have my very own, dedicated wildlife area and even a pond as well!



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Let me start by explaining how small my allotment is. It's 13 metres by 7 metres and is a third the size of an average full sized plot. Even though it is tiny I made it my mission to fit as much as possible into the space that I had, including a 6'x4' shed, a 2.5 metre by 6 metre fruit cage, a galvanised trough, two strawberry raised beds and 3 rotational vegetable beds. Phew!

I was also lucky enough to have a small space available next to my shed to do what I pleased with and my first plans were to create a cut-flower bed, which later turned into a wild flower meadow idea, which then turned into a plan to build a wildlife pond. And that is how my wildlife haven was born.



I made the pond all by myself and it was a simple matter of digging a hole roughly 90cm deep with two shelves 30cm deep and a slope on one end. I laid a pond liner down, cut it to size and filled it with water, I also placed some larger stones and small pebbles around the edge to hide the pond liner and to make it look a little nicer. Last but not least I popped a water forget me not, a ranunculus aquatilis and some oxygenation myositis scorpioides into the water and the pond was complete. Now all I had to do was sit and wait for some frogs and I'm happy to say that 5 months later two frogs heads appeared on the water's surface to sunbathe. I was over the moon and so happy to see them, fingers crossed they stay!




The pond only measures 1 metre by 1.5 metres which allowed me to have some space surrounding it and I just couldn't resist filling it with flowers. I already had a few seedlings growing at home to fill this space with, including dwarf cosmos, scabious pin cushion, verbena, zinnia and sunflowers. The four giant sunflowers went at the back with a few of the other taller plants like the verbena, and then I scattered a wild flower seed

mix down around the pond and waited to see what would appear. Now I'll tell you what appeared... weeds, weeds and more weeds. The wildflower seed mix was a complete and utter failure, the only flowers that appeared were some pretty linum! Later this year I will be weeding this area and next year I will be choosing and planting more seedlings of flowers that I love. The best thing about the flowers is that they brought in the wildlife and the star attraction was the verbena. The bees and butterflies absolutely adored it and it has turned into one of my all-time favourite flowers.



I plan to make a few homes to hide away in the wildlife patch, including a small bug hotel and a little home for the frogs which will consist of either a small log pile house or a cracked terracotta pot turned upside down. I did however get round to make a leaf cutter bee hotel this year and it only cost me 50p to make! I used dried common hogweed stems which are hollow making them perfect nests for the leafcutter bees. I made a wooden frame using an old pallet and attached some slate to the roof, a simple yet effective little house. It's hanging on the side of my shed right next to the tall verbena, a perfect bee hotel in the middle of the wildlife haven.





There will be more flowers on my plot next year as the tomato trough is being turned into a dahlia trough, so fingers crossed there will be more bees buzzing around next Summer. Autumn has arrived however, and the allotment is starting to show the signs, this gives me more time to plan and I will just like to finish this post by telling you all that next year I will be getting chickens!

Thanks for reading,

Katie

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