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Home > Advice > Verbena bonariensis - star of the pollinator-friendly patch

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verbena bonariensis - star of the pollinator-friendly patch

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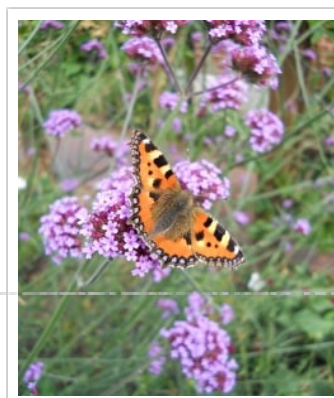
All through the summer months the beds we planted earlier in the year have filled out and thickened. From their one and two litre pot beginnings the new plants have flourished and flowered, and at last we're beginning to get a sense of how the beds will look when fully matured.

ADVICE

One is a deep rectangle planted with grasses, echinacea and geums, knautia macedonica, nepeta and salvia, alliums and Japanese anemones, all against a wisteria-covered walkway.

Another is our pond-side bed, with its striking multi-stemmed birch around which we've planted gaura lindheimeri, irises and astilbes, while hostas, alchemilla and geraniums parade gently along the water's edge.

Both beds feature flowers to attract butterflies and bees, and both include what has to be the star of our pollinator-friendly patch - *verbena bonariensis*. Of all the new plants, this tall perennial, with its clusters of tiny, highly scented, purple flowers, has attracted the greatest number and variety of insects. Hoverflies, honey bees and bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and even dragonflies, have enjoyed its nectar-rich blooms.



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It has survived all that the summer has thrown at it – intense heat, high winds and heavy rain; and, unlike the geums, geraniums and knautia, it hasn't needed dead-heading at all.

Its towering stems lend structure and height to our planting plans without compromising the overall wispieness of waving grasses and prairie-inspired planting. It doesn't block the views of the garden and woodland beyond: its purple clusters seeming to hover independently above everything else. And even now in September it is still going strong.



In short, *verbena bonariensis* has it all – elegant, scented, low maintenance and long-lasting, and an absolute magnet for pollinating insects.

So, if you are hoping to attract more bees and butterflies to your garden next year – and I hope that you are – I would definitely recommend planting some.



Thanks for reading,

Helen D

Helen D writes about simple pleasures and seasonal observations at [The House at Nab End](#). She is a volunteer BeeWalker for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and her gardening is inspired by her love of the natural world.

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