

Episode 153 show notes and advice

Episode description

Our gardens, humble as they may seem, are among the country's most important havens for biodiversity, and there are few greater champions for biodiversity than Dr Steve Head.

Steve joins Sarah on this podcast episode alongside Adam Nicolson to share how the intermediate level of disturbance that we naturally give our gardens makes them so wonderful for wildlife.

In this episode, discover:

- How Sarah met Steve, and the revelations that he continues to provide her about wildlife at Perch Hill and beyond
- The various reasons that gardens are so good for cultivating biodiversity
- What you're doing for biodiversity when you dig up your ground, and how to know that you're digging too much or too little
- The inspiration that Steve derives from a long time heroine of his, Jennifer Owen
- Why we should all care about insects, pollinators, and our impact on biodiversity

How Sarah and Steve first met, and their work together (2:45)

Sarah recalls the first time that she and Steve met, previously filming for the Bees, Butterflies & Blooms TV series. Since then, he's undertaken a number of biodiversity audits at Perch Hill to observe how wildlife thrives among our range of flowers.

Early in this podcast episode, Sarah also refers to a particular graph which notes our remarkable impact on biodiversity by virtue of how we care for our gardens.

The reasons that gardens benefit biodiversity (5:45)

Our natural gardening activities amount to what Steve describes as an 'intermediate level of disturbance', which prevents dominant plants from spoiling the range of flowers that we all aspire to.

It's those vital gardening jobs which make most gardens more biodiverse than many British habitats, even before paying particular attention to serving insects and pollinators.

Busting the myth that pollinators need only our native species (14:10)

There's a myth that Sarah notes around the need to plant only our native species in order to best help pollinators.

We're naturally drawn to flowers that are longer-flowering, rather than those which die out quickly - Steve brings particular attention to the fact that pollinators appreciate long-flowering plants just the same, regardless of whether they're native.

Jennifer Owen's work, and its influence on Steve (18:45)

A long time heroine of Steve's is Jennifer Owen, whose work on 'Wildlife of a Garden' showed the sheer range of biodiversity on display in any ordinary garden.

Why we should care about biodiversity (22:40)

There's an all-important question beneath everything discussed, namely why we should all be as invested in the movement to encourage biodiversity as Steve is.

Alongside the importance of the complex food web that Steve mentions, we also hear Adam and Sarah discuss the many things that can be done even in urban areas and public spaces to welcome a greater range of wildlife.