

Country Notes for May 2019

As I write this in mid-April, with the Easter weekend just a few days away, the forecasters tell us that we are in for an early glimpse of summer with sunshine and temperatures around 20c. Just the sort of weather to tempt even the most reluctant gardener to start work outside, with maybe the reward of a BBQ in the evening! I imagine too that many people will be heading off to their local nursery or garden centre to buy some plants to gladden the heart and feed the soul later in the years, for even though the danger of frosts is still there, our gardens are well and truly bursting into new life.

Many of the plants on offer will also benefit our wildlife too. What better bonus on top of the sight of beautiful flowers, is the knowledge that we are providing provision for our wildlife. Planting a berry bearing bush such as cotoneaster or rowan will provide food for hungry thrushes later in the year, whilst fruit trees such as plums or apples will provide not only for ourselves but also for birds and butterflies. Members of the red admiral and peacock family will gorge themselves so heavily on windfalls in the autumn that they often appear drunk!

Many flowering plants will provide sustenance for both butterflies and day flying moths. Buddleia is probably the best example, with some bushes almost heaving with the number of butterflies and moths enjoying their nectar. The best day flying moths to watch out for later in the year are hummingbird hawk moths, which look just like small hummingbirds, their wings almost a blur. Very much a moth of the Mediterranean countries these moths have taken to visiting our country more and more in recent years. Silver Ys and Golden Ys are also worth looking out for. As their names suggest these two moths, which also fly with their wings almost a blur, have a letter Y clearly marked on their forewings.

Other plants which attract these day flying moths are valerian and verbena, both easily bought or begged! Valerian looks very attractive in my garden, growing out of cracks and crevices in the wall and appearing year after year. Verbena is easily bought and added to tubs and window boxes once the danger of frost is over.

As the days lengthen and the temperature rises, what a treat we have in store!

Happy gardening and wildlife spotting!

Andrew G Snowdon