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Grow a secret garden for butterflies!

- The Wildlife Trusts and RHS urge gardeners to help butterflies and moths for this year's Wild About Gardens campaign
- Make a pledge for butterflies from 12th March!
- Campaign inspired by a new film – *The Secret Garden* – that celebrates the joys of wildlife gardening

This year's Wild About Gardens campaign, run jointly by The Wildlife Trusts and Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), is calling on gardeners to get growing to help the UK's falling numbers of butterflies and moths.

The new campaign draws inspiration from a dazzling new film adaptation of the Frances Hodgson Burnett classic, *The Secret Garden*, starring Colin Firth, Julie Walters and newcomer Dixie Egerickx as Mary Lennox. The film will be bringing the magic of wildlife, childhood and gardening to the big screen this Spring when it blooms in cinemas across the UK from Good Friday, 10th April 2020.

Butterflies and moths are important pollinators and, along with caterpillars, are vital food for birds like robins and blue tits as well as bats. However, their habitats have faced catastrophic declines and once-common species like the small tortoiseshell have dropped by up to 80% in the last 30 years in some areas.

An ideal butterfly garden has a wide variety of plants throughout the year to support their life cycles – for butterflies and moths emerging from hibernation, egg-laying females, caterpillars and then adults. Early-flowering species such as dandelions, aubretia and native bluebells are good sources of nectar; these could be followed by buddleia and red valerian and, finally, ivy flowers which are a great late-season asset in the autumn. Many wildflowers and long grass are also excellent larval food-plants. Whether your garden is large or small – or simply a flowering window-box – it could throw these declining insects a lifeline, especially in urban areas.

The Wildlife Trusts' gardening champion, horticulturist and TV presenter Frances Tophill says:

“Our garden flowers and plants provide a rich source of rejuvenating nectar for these much-loved garden visitors as they emerge from hibernation to herald the start of spring. Go wild in your garden and leave the dandelions and daisies in the lawn to

provide a meal, aim for year-round flowers and include a wildflower area for egg-laying females as well as gardeners' favourites like lavender, nasturtium and verbena. The *Wild About Gardens* website is packed with information and easy actions we can all take to support butterflies and moths throughout their impressive life cycle."

Ellie Brodie, senior policy manager of The Wildlife Trusts says:

"We all love watching moths and butterflies as they flutter by and brighten up our gardens – being in nature replenishes us and makes us happy. We know that UK wildlife is in decline and needs our help – that's why we're asking gardeners to work together and create a wave of long grass, wildflowers, colour and perfume across the country – a nature recovery network for these gorgeous creatures."

Helen Bostock, Senior Horticultural Advisor at the RHS says:

"Many butterfly and moth species are helpful pollinators and an important part of a balanced, healthy garden. With many of their natural habitats under threat, consider rewilding an area of the garden to provide food and shelter for these fascinating insects or sacrificing a patch of plants – for example, a window box bursting with nasturtiums will help attract large white butterflies away from your cabbage crop."

Pledge for butterflies

Every butterfly garden counts. We want to know about every new wild area, box or border that's being grown for butterflies. Each garden contributes towards the network of green spaces that nature needs to survive. Please pledge a bit of garden for butterflies and put it on the map here www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk.
(NB the pledge will go live on 12th March 2020.)

Take notice of nature

In the story of *The Secret Garden*, the garden eases grief, heals rifts and brings the joy out in all who experience it. Make a special place for wildlife – your very own *Secret Garden* where you can replenish your soul, reconnect with nature and help wildlife to thrive. You've probably noticed how spotting butterflies or birds, or walking through woodlands, or alongside rivers and streams can help to lift your mood. Make some time for nature today and enjoy the restorative benefits!

Download or pick up a booklet

The Wildlife Trusts and RHS have published a beautiful – free – booklet with colourful advice and easy tips designed to make our outdoor spaces more attractive to butterflies, moths and their caterpillars. Available here <https://wtru.st/butterfly> and on the Wild About Gardens website from 12th March.

These will be available at special events during the spring including the Chelsea Flower Show and promoted through Wildlife Trust events, visitor centres and community action groups including the In Bloom network.

Find the full range of wildlife gardening booklets, advice and inspiration here www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening

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Editors notes

Butterfly and moth fact file

- There are 59 species of butterfly and more than 2,500 moths in Britain, plus many others that may visit from Europe and elsewhere through the summer.
- Several species of butterfly – including brimstone, comma, small tortoiseshell and peacock – overwinter as adults and will seek out sheltered spots in late autumn to lay dormant until the spring. Others overwinter as eggs, caterpillars or pupae.
- Many butterflies and moths spend most of their lives in the caterpillar or pupal stages. A good food supply is crucial to enable hungry caterpillars to turn into adults.
- caterpillars hatch from eggs laid by adult females after around two weeks, and once the caterpillar has eaten enough, it sheds its skin for the last time into a pupa.
- It emerges from a pupa between one week to a whole season later to seek out nectar.
- While they cannot carry as much pollen as some bees, which have specially created 'sacs' for storage, butterflies and moths are quite hairy and collect pollen on their legs and bodies as they gather nectar, carrying it from flower to flower.
- Moths tend to seek out white and lighter coloured flowers as they are easier to see in the dark, while some flowers such as honeysuckle emit their scent at night specially to lure in these nocturnal creatures.
- It takes [10,000 caterpillars to rear a brood of blue tits](#) (source: BTO)

Wild About Gardens

The Wildlife Trusts and the RHS set up Wild About Gardens www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk in 2009. It is an annual celebration of wildlife gardening and provides a focus to encourage people to use their gardens and take action to help support wildlife. Over the past 50 years we've seen declines in two thirds of the UK's plant and animal species, for a range of reasons, including loss of habitat. Many of our common garden species - hedgehogs, house sparrows, starlings and common frogs, for example – are increasingly endangered. Gardens have enormous potential to act as mini-nature reserves. There are an estimated 24 million gardens in the UK.

The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts believe that people need nature and it needs us. We are here to make the world wilder and to make nature part of everyone's lives. We are a grassroots movement of 46 charities with more than 850,000 members and 38,000 volunteers. No matter where you are in the UK, there is a Wildlife Trust inspiring people and saving, protecting and standing up for the natural world. With the support of our members, we care for and restore special places for nature on land and run marine conservation projects and collect vital data on the state of our seas. Every Wildlife Trust works within its local community to inspire people to create a wilder future – from advising thousands of landowners on how to manage their land to benefit wildlife, to connecting hundreds of thousands of school children with nature every year. wildlifetrusts.org

About the RHS

The Royal Horticultural Society, the world's leading gardening charity, was founded in 1804 by Sir Joseph Banks and John Wedgwood. Our vision is to enrich everyone's life through plants, and make the UK greener and more beautiful place. This aspiration underpins all that we do, from inspirational

gardens and shows, through our scientific research, to our education and community programmes such as Campaign for School Gardening and Britain in Bloom. We produce key publications, hold a world-class collection of horticultural books and botanical art, and sell the very best plants and gardening gifts. The RHS is fundraising £40m to transform our gardens, outreach and education facilities, which includes redeveloping our flagship RHS Garden Wisley and opening a new garden, RHS Garden Bridgewater, in 2020. We are solely funded by our members, visitors and supporters. For more information visit www.rhs.org.uk. RHS Registered Charity No. 222879/SC038262