

Welcome to May!

May is the month when Horse Chestnut trees start to bloom. These magnificent trees can grow to a height of about 40 metres and they look proud and majestic wherever they stand. But in May, they are decorated with large droplets of white and pink flowers which make them look even more special. Not only that, but the flowers contain lots of pollen and nectar which bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects absolutely love! Look out for them as you walk along the street or in the park and prepare to be impressed!



Their leaves are pretty special too, with 5–7 pointed, toothed leaflets spreading from a central stem. Amazing to look at, but also a valuable source of food for caterpillars of the **Triangle Moth** and the **Horse Chestnut Leaf-Miner Moth** whose caterpillars also provide food for **blue tits**. All that goodness to wildlife from just one tree!

Once you have found a horse chestnut tree near you watch it throughout the year and you will see the flowers fade, the leaves change colour and then they will produce their next bit of magic – conkers! (another wildlife food as deer love them). **Did you know** that the trees can only make conkers if the flowers have been pollinated by the insects? Another good reason to love and look after the insects in our world.

You can look out for blue tits in your garden too. These colourful birds can often be seen in gardens, especially if seed is left out for them to feed on. As well as seeds and nuts that we might leave out for them they like to eat caterpillars and other insects that they have to find for themselves. Hopefully, if we plant lots of plants that butterflies and other pollinating insects love, (and don't spray our plants with insect killer) they will find plenty to feast on and we can enjoy watching them in our gardens. Here is a link to a page where you can see some more information about them and listen to their song. See if you can hear them when you are outside. [Blue Tit](#)



If you would like to make a bird feeder to encourage the birds into your garden there are many different ideas out there. Here is one using just an old plastic bottle and a few other things you might have around the house (maybe you could use pencils instead of sticks?) Be careful with the cutting – you might need help from an adult. Hopefully soon you will be watching the birds enjoy what you have made.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yV6V6rtpyc>

Another thing that your family could get involved with this month (without leaving your house) is 'No Mow May'. If we leave areas of grass unmown for longer than usual we will get different types of flower appearing, and this will, in turn, encourage more insect life and hence other wildlife to our gardens. The idea is that you count how many flowers are in a square metre of lawn at the beginning of the month (don't worry if you are a few days late) and then leave your lawn to grow. At the end of the month you count in the same area and give your results in. You will then be able to find out how many bees your lawn can support. To register and find out more go to <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/everyflowercounts/>

Who knows what treasures your grass holds!

