

Garden diary number seven

Wildlife and wildflowers start off this garden diary. It shows a good balance between plantsmanship and the environment when nature comes in of its own accord. When walking on a nature reserve on a warm calm day the insect and bird activity add an extra dimension which a photograph simply cannot capture. The first photo is a small wildflower patch in my own garden which is only 3 feet square but has a number of native species that attract a lot of pollinators. Just digging out the topsoil and replacing with subsoil and grit provided an ideal planting medium. Second photo is *Epipactis palustris* the marsh helleborine which snakes its way around this bed in a delightful fashion.



Next photos were sent in by Norma Pagdin and Joan Bradbury who live in County Durham. The first photo shows self-sown orchids growing on the lawn. The land is on a magnesian limestone belt which runs from Nottingham up to this area. It surfaces in different areas creating calcareous habitats. Brockadale, Burton Leonard kiln works and Townclose Hills are reserves on this belt. The second photo is *Viola odorata* the sweet white violet which grows under hedgerows preferring the shade.



Next page was sent in by Georgina Instone and is a well written article about their encounter with a red-legged partridge in their own garden.

Wildlife in our garden – Georgina Instone.

We have had something very interesting in the garden but it didn't end well. At the beginning of April, we discovered a Red-legged Partridge had chosen our garden to have its nest. Ian was working out in the garden when he heard a different bird call. The nest was only a couple of yards/ metres from our dining room window and was under the snowdrop leaves. The pair of birds would come into our garden from the fields at the back of us and walk down the garden to the back of the house.



The male would stand guard on the lawn while the female went into the nest and laid her egg. I say nest, it was just a hollow scrape in the bare soil with a few bits of moss and leaves added to it. This happened every couple of days until 12 eggs had been laid. Then nothing happened for two weeks until one day we realised one of the of the birds was sitting on the eggs, presumably the female. We then kept away from that part of the garden so we didn't disturb her. Some days she would leave the nest for an hour or so and others she would stay all the time.



We had set up a camera to see what happened which would be triggered by movement. It takes 25 or so days of incubation until the eggs hatch and by now the snowdrop leaves had started to die down. There were other plants around her but the nest was exposed when she left it. It was on the tenth morning when we peeped out of the window and saw nothing. No bird and no eggs. We brought the camera inside and had a look at the film on the computer. A couple of times at night a cat had been in the area and the Partridge had left the nest but the next picture told us what had happened. A Magpie had taken all the eggs. We don't know for sure but maybe the cat had disturbed her when it was daylight and the Magpie had taken advantage of her not being on the nest. She came back to the nest a couple of times to check what had happened but we haven't seen either of the Partridges since although we have heard them in the fields. We experienced something not many would be able to do and it is something we will always remember. We knew the nest was vulnerable though because of the cats and Magpies in our area. Let's hope she has better luck next year.

The photos on this page are a mixture from my own garden, Trevor Wright's and Breezy Knees Gardens near York and show some good plant associations.



We visited Breezy Knees gardens near York last week and they were looking very excellent. The social distancing was well adhered to and the plant sales were well stocked with reasonably priced quality items. Café and toilets were both open and we had a very enjoyable day strolling around at our leisure. This is my favourite part of the garden which has a fantastic variety of perennials.



Above left is *Dierama igneum* with *Clematis Corrine* from Trevor's garden. The *Dieramas* originate from South Africa and did very well in my own garden after all the early sun. The other photos are of one bed in my own garden, it receives full sun for most of the day and is planted with sun loving plants. There are species tulips planted for a spring display which then get baked before the herbaceous plants grow over them.



Above left is *Crepis incana* a Greek species which thrives in this bed. It is surrounded by thyme, oregano, *Dianthus* and *Eryngiums*. The last photo is *Epipactis passionata* growing through lavenders, the former is a hybrid orchid between *E. royleana* and *E. palustris*. The colours complement one another and they are at their peak at the same time. The orchid spreads via rhizomes and prefer damp conditions but are happy in the shade the lavender affords. I always water it in the early summer if the weather is dry to give it a good start.

Last is a page of *Roscoea* plants which have become a favourite genus of mine recently and seeing these photos made me determined to increase my collection. The Kew Gardens monograph of this species is currently on sale on Ebay for £18 which at less than half price is a bargain for such a well-produced and informative book.



Above left is *R. Harvington Raw silk* with *Geranium striatum* to the fore with *Erodium chrysanthum* to the rear. All three make up a lovely clump which again shows good planting. Above right is a particularly fine form of *R. McBeath's Pink*, another one for my wish list! Above two photos are from Trevor Wright's garden.

Lastly, two lovely close ups from Fred Bundy showing the flowers off to great effect. Left photo is *R. Harrington Evening Star*, the right is *R. Humeana forma alba*.



Please keep the photos coming in, it is really nice for me to put these diaries together

Best Regards – Charlie. Email address is charlie.philpotts@btinternet.com