

## Baginton Gardeners

At our July meeting Elayne shared the news that Sue Burgham would be taking over the role of chair of the group. Elayne would be staying on as a member of the committee, but would be passing on the “Spade” to Sue in the new year.

July’s speaker was Lucy Hartley, who returned to give another excellent lecture, this time on “Ecology in the Modern Garden”

Her opening slide quoted **Daryl Moore, Oct 2022** “*Nurturing a garden is one of the most important things you can do as a person*” as expected all those present agreed. Lucy shared how vital we are as “Keystone animals” in our garden’s eco system and how the eco-systems diversity can change with our help.

Lucy explained how we can increase the diversity with in our garden by considering what we plant and when it flowers. Such as by planting spring flowering plants with white, yellow or blue flowers we will encourage more spring pollinators in to our gardens. We learnt that an Apple tree will support, feed or home 93 different types of life, a Bird's-foot trefoil Plant 140, and Garlic mustard 69. Whereas an Oak tree will support over 300, from birds to insects to lichens. Which is a complex life form that is a symbiotic partnership of a fungus and an alga.

Lucy talked about her success with leaving nature to control any insect infestations. Predators only reproduce once a year, so if you use pesticides, you risk killing both predator and prey, then being overrun with prey as they reproduce all year round. Although if you allow the prey to build to a level notice by the predators, they will start and continue to feed on them over the year. If you want predators to be your pest control you need to feed their young. This means having weeds and wild flowers in your garden, many of which are just as beautiful as our traditional flowering plants. You could plant Scarlet Pimpernel with its tiny orange red flowers, or Speedwell with its dainty blue flowers or the yellow flowers of the Nipplewort.

Another experiment Lucy had been working on was her lawn. She delayed mowing some areas until June or even late September, allowing grass to produce seed heads which along with the unsightly ant hills were a true feast for the birds at the end of summer. By bring “border Plants” into the expanse of her lawn, she created more insect safe havens which again became part of a wider food chain and increased the diversity of her garden.

Lucy then focused on the garden soil reminding us that even the soil is an eco-system, full of millions of organisms that are regularly disrupted by digging up weeds. She shared a way to remove weeds (plants in the wrong place) by cutting close to the soil line just under the upper growth of the plant. This method reduced soil damage and seed spreading. With over 30 species of worms in the UK, some consider that “*Worms may be more important to the eco-system and human well-being than bees*” **Dave Goulson, The Garden Jungle 2019**, so we need to feed the worms too. Don’t rake up the leaves it won’t kill the grass, dead matter is good for the garden and good for the worms.

So summing up Lucy gave us 5 tips to increase the diversity within our gardens eco-system

1. Let some grass grow.
2. Don’t use pesticides, fertiliser or herbicides.
3. Leave dead things about.
4. Let wild flowers grow.
5. Snip off don’t dig up weed.

Lucy also shared the names of two apps she uses for identification of both plants and wild life. iNaturalist and ObsIdentify both help you identify plants and animals while generating data for science and conservation. <https://www.inaturalist.org/> <https://observation.org>

Our next meeting is Monday 16 September when Geoff Hodge will share his ways to get plants for free using his propagation tips. Our last meeting for 2024 will be our Quiz night.

Meetings take place bi-monthly at the British Legion Club, Kimberley Road, Baginton @ 7:30pm. Everyone is always welcome so please spread the word, cost to non-members £4 per meeting.

For more information please contact

Elayne on 02475 013 147 or [elaynemeakin@gmail.com](mailto:elaynemeakin@gmail.com)

Sue on 07949 067 875 or [seburgham@gmail.com](mailto:seburgham@gmail.com)