SCOTTISH INVERTEBRATE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

School grounds, parks and urban greenspaces

Introduction

A massive 3 million hectares of flower-rich grassland have been lost in the UK since World War Two . These flower-rich areas were vital habitats for a wide range of species.

Many school grounds, parks and other urban greenspaces are currently mown regularly and have very little wildlife value. Sympathetically managed greenspaces can provide refuges and stepping stones for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, as well as habitat and a food source for other invertebrates, amphibians, mammals and birds.

Invertebrates have an important role to play in urban greenspaces. Bumblebees and wasps help to pollinate flowers, snails and slugs breakdown leaf litter, and beetles and centipedes help to control pests. This factsheet describes some of the simple things that you can do in school ground, parks and other urban greenspaces to encourage invertebrates.


7-spot ladybird (*Coccinella 7-punctata*)
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10 simple things to do to benefit invertebrates

- Soften the visual impact of chain link fences by planting creepers such as wild clematis, honeysuckle and ivy along their length. Ivy is a particularly important nectar source for insects.
- Leave an area of grass to grow and seed. Lots of wildflowers will appear amongst the grass, providing food and shelter for invertebrates.
- Avoid using pesticides as this will result in fewer natural predators such as ladybirds and lacewings.
- Butterflies and moths like different heights of grass. Cut your grass on a rotational basis so that there are a variety of sward heights.
- Creating a pond or wetland will attract insects such as dragonflies and damselflies to breed. Shallow margins with lots of semi-aquatic plants provide emergence areas for aquatic insects.
- Create a sensory area by planting raised beds with aromatic herbs. Bumblebees, hoverflies and butterflies will all use these herbs as food sources.
- Dead wood is important for a wide range of invertebrates. Fallen trees should be cut into lengths and left on site where they will attract millipedes, beetles and many other invertebrates.
- Always use native plants and trees. Non-native species are often less palatable to native invertebrates and some species can grow rapidly, preventing the growth of slower growing native plants.
- Plant hedges with species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and guelder rose to provide food and shelter and also to control access.
- Willow can be weaved to create windbreaks and sheltered areas. It's also home to an amazing 266 insect species!

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