

## MO MOW MAY

What a month of rain! It's looking like the wettest May on record. So a big 'Well Done!' to all of you who left grass unmown for the sake of our pollinators and other struggling wildlife. If you would still like to contribute to the charity Plantlife's 'Every Flower Counts' survey, you have until 31 May. It's a simple three-step process, explained fully at <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/everyflowercounts/3-easy-steps/>

- 1 Mark a 1 metre square quadrant on your lawn (could use bamboo canes, known as a quadrat!).
- 2 For each type of flower in your quadrat, count the number of open flowers you find.
- 3 Once you've completed the survey, simply submit your results on line.

If you want to boost flowers and nectar from now on, you can give your lawn a 'Mowhican' haircut with a mixture of **both short-grass and long-grass areas** in your garden. Here's how:

**Short grass areas:** The highest production of flowers and nectar is on lawns cut once every four weeks, such as with Plantlife's 'No Mow May'. This gives small plants like daisies, selfheal, white clover and bird's-foot-trefoil a chance to flower in profusion, which can boost nectar production tenfold. The occasional cutting actually stimulates more flowers to appear, while the short plants duck under the mower blades and carry on growing. Short grass will attract many insects, such as mining bees that create burrows in the ground.

- How often? Cut once a month (every 4 weeks)
- When? April to November
- How? With a lawnmower that collects grass clippings
- How high? Between 2.5 and 5 cm (1-2 inches)

You can mow like this on paths or borders to frame long-grass areas. Key flowers include white clover, which produces lots of nectar; bird's foot trefoil which feeds over 130 different invertebrates; and selfheal, loved by bumblebees.

**Long-grass areas:** Longer grass left unmown from spring to autumn is home to a wider range of flowers, with tall plants like oxeye daisy, field scabious, red clover, knapweed and even orchids. These increase the range of nectar sources for different pollinators and extend nectar production well into autumn. Long grass also provides valuable feeding material, shelter and nesting sites for many invertebrates.

- How often? Cut twice a year
- When? In September and again before Christmas
- How? First cut with a scythe, sheers or a strimmer (check for wildlife first!). Second cut with a lawnmower that collects the clippings
- How high? Between 5 and 10 cm (2-4 inches)

You can spread the hay from the first cut on other areas of grass to transfer seeds and increase flowers. If you leave some areas uncut all winter there will be habitats for insects and other wildlife.

**PS** Make sure to play [Biodiversity Bingo](#) between 28 May and 8. Priston Parish Council is sponsoring prizes!

**Penny Rogers**  
**24 May 2021**