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THE GAME
CONSERVANCY
TRUST

FARMING FOR WILDLIFE

Pollen and nectar mixtures

ELS

OELS

HLS

SA



Mike Edwards (Defra)



Richard Winspear (RSPB)

Many insects benefit from the availability of flowering plants from March to September provided by pollen and nectar mixtures.

Pollen and nectar mixtures provide flowering plants throughout spring and summer to supply food for insects such as butterflies and bumblebees. They can be funded by Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) or Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS). ELS includes an option to grow the mixtures on set-aside, or they can be established on set-aside outside of Environmental Stewardship. Different rules apply to the different options, and you should check the latest Defra literature or seek advice to ensure your management meets the relevant requirements.

BENEFITS FOR WILDLIFE

Flowering plants attract pollen- and nectar-feeding insects

Some insects, such as bumblebees, are vital pollinators of crops and wild flowers. Bumblebees have declined as suitable plants, such as red clover, have become scarcer in the countryside. These, and other insects, benefit

from sowing flower-rich mixtures. Hoverflies are especially attracted to flowering plants and will lay eggs wherever there is an abundance of aphids for their larvae to feed on, thus helping to reduce numbers of these pests in nearby crops. The general increase in insects attracted to these mixtures also provides food for birds.

HOW CAN I CREATE AND MANAGE POLLEN AND NECTAR MIXTURES?

PREPARATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Use a mix of at least three legumes, such as red clover, alsike clover and bird's-foot-trefoil.
- Fine grasses, such as fescues, bents and meadow grasses, can be used in the mix to reduce the impact of annual weeds. A mix of 80% fine grasses and 20% legumes should be sown at a seed rate of 15-20 kg/ha. Mixes established on set-aside outside of Environmental Stewardship should contain no more than 50% legume seed by weight.
- Create blocks of up to 0.5 ha in size. Aim for between two and five blocks per 100 ha to provide a network of habitats for insects around the farm.
- Choose locations that receive a lot of sunlight. These plots also look attractive, so consider siting them along footpaths.
- March/April or July/August are the best months for establishment.
- The mixture should need no fertiliser or pesticides. Herbicide use is restricted to use of a contact non-residual herbicide prior to establishment, or spot treatment or weed-wiping of pernicious weeds.
- Take steps to prevent the drift of pesticides or fertilisers from the adjacent crops.
- Pollen and nectar mixtures may be sown on arable land or grassland. Do not create plots on unimproved or species-rich grassland. Grazing of the plots is only permitted in autumn and winter, but ensure the sward is not damaged by excessive cattle-trampling.
- Half of the area is cut in June to stimulate late flowering, and the

whole area is then cut in September or October. Check the plot for brown hares or nesting game birds before cutting in June. It is better to remove the cuttings to protect the flowering plants in the sward. Otherwise, try to chop and spread the cuttings to avoid smothering the sward.

- The mix may need to be re-established after three to five years if the flowering plant component has become depleted.

NATURAL POLLEN AND NECTAR SOURCES

Protect the other habitats on the farm that provide pollen and nectar, such as woodland, pond banks and watercourses, hedgerows, field margins, broad-leaved weeds in the crop headlands or areas of unimproved grassland.

KEY POINTS

A continuous supply of pollen and nectar is made available by establishing a mix of flowering plants and by management to encourage late flowering. Protect the natural sources of pollen and nectar on the farm, such as flowering plants in hedgerows and field margins.

Check the latest set-aside rules or scheme guidelines to ensure your management meets the relevant requirements.

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



Agricultural Adviser, The RSPB, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. Tel: 01767 680551

www.rspb.org.uk/farming



Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, NAC, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2RX. Tel: 024 7669 6699

www.fwag.org.uk



The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF. Tel: 01425 652381

www.gct.org.uk

The Defra ELS, OELS and HLS schemes can fund this type of management. For full details, refer to the scheme handbooks.

This habitat can be created on set-aside and still score points in the ELS scheme.

ELS = Entry Level Stewardship

OELS = Organic Entry Level Stewardship

HLS = Higher Level Stewardship

SA = Set-aside