

National Allotments Week Celebrates 20th Year

Tuesday 26 July, 2022

National Allotments Week started in 2002 as a way of raising awareness of allotments and the role they play in helping people to live healthier lifestyles, grow their own food, develop friendships, and bolster communities. The campaign week is still thriving 20 years later and interest in growing your own fruit and vegetables has never been stronger since the WW2 Grow for Victory campaign.

Marking its 20th year, National Allotment Week 2022 - running 8th-14th August- looks to the future and how we can conserve allotments for the next generation through education and engagement of children and young people.

This year's National Allotments Week theme is Bugs, bees and broccoli and acknowledges the importance of gardening with nature in mind.

An allotment plot is a complex web of plants, micro-organisms, fungi, insects, and animals that not only produces food but also supports eco-system services such as pollination and offers a refuge for wildlife in urban areas.

Although allotment plots like pollinator ecologist Nadine Mitschunas' beautiful wildlife allotment garden (winner of Gardeners World magazine, 2021 Garden of the Year award) are few and far between there are thousands of plot-holders endeavouring to reduce pesticide and herbicide use, encourage beneficial insects, small mammals and amphibians and tolerate losing a few crops to achieve a balance eco-system on their plots.

Plot holders can take part in a bug survey that will help inform the work of Buglife and the conservation of insects. Gaining a better understanding of creepy crawlies on allotment sites in the UK will guide how the organisation preserves them.

Paul Hetherington of BugLife said:

'Bugs are so important to the healthy functioning of our allotments. As gardeners we tend to focus on the 'pests' and ignore all the great work the other bugs are doing for us, but if they were not, we would miss them be it pollinating our fruit and veg, controlling our pests or improving our soil they are vital to healthy growing.'

As part of National Allotments Week young people **aged 2-12** can take part in **The Big Bug Hunt** with their school or learning community!

Being outside has such a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children and the summer holidays are the perfect time for them to have fun outdoors, learn a bit about their surroundings and how they can protect the creatures that live there.

Pupils at schools and early years settings taking part can email a picture or a scan of their finished worksheet with their name, the school's name and address to natsoc@nsalg.org.uk **by 14th August**.

The school or setting that has the MOST bug hunts returned in their region will win a prize to help them grow their own veg in the classroom.

The grow your own veg boxes and seeds are sponsored by Chris Knott Insurance and will encourage young people to engage with the process of how and where their food comes from.

NAS PR and Marketing Co-ordinator Lauren Lawless said:

'It is vital to the preservation of allotments that we work to engage and educate young people about the importance of these green spaces and the creatures that live there. A lot of our members remember spending time on the allotment as a child and that passion for growing things has stuck with them. Not every child has access to an allotment but if we can work with schools and early years settings to help children learn about growing their own food and the benefit to the environment, we will hopefully inspire a new generation of plot holders'

Chris Knott added: *'Chris Knott Insurance is delighted to sponsor the prize for the National Allotments Week Big Bug Hunt 2022. It's a fantastic way to get children out of the house while nurturing their interest*

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in the natural world. We can't wait to see how many children get involved!

The NAS have sent bug hunts to 125 school in 11 regions up and down the UK but there are plenty more- schools and nurseries can email marketing@nsalg.org.uk for a copy of the bug hunt and more information.

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