Unique online tool launched to help save bumblebees and other pollinating insects

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With global crashes in insect numbers causing alarm, a unique free online gardening resource to get people growing more flowers for bumblebees and other pollinating insects has been launched at the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show in the Peak District this week by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The conservation charity's upgraded, interactive 'Bee kind' web tool helps people across the UK choose the best plants for pollinators in their gardens, window boxes or community spaces – including native 'bee super plants' such as apple trees, bugle, foxglove, lavender, and red clover.

Users can find out and score how bee-friendly their patch already is, and how to improve it for pollinators, with advice based on conditions in their own gardens. They can also discover how to ensure bumblebees have a lifeline of food even in months when nectar-rich plants are in short supply.

Gill Perkins, Bumblebee Conservation Trust CEO, said: "Bee kind provides people with vital information to make bee-friendly choices in their gardens and green spaces. With so much worry about insect declines, it's useful to know there are simple, positive actions we can all take. If everyone planted just one bee-friendly plant we could make a huge difference to bumblebees and other insect pollinators."

Bee kind is available at beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org and can be used by schools, businesses, councils and the public. It can also help local authorities deliver national and local pollinator strategies.

The tool includes a database of more than 650 plantspecies – never collected for pollinators in this way before – with many images generously provided by the Royal Horticultural Society and floralimages.co.uk .

The charity's experts spent a year upgrading Bee kind – including by reviewing the latest scientific evidence about the best plants for bees – with invaluable input from volunteers and Plantlife. The tool will be updated as more data becomes available, including citizen science feedback from users.

The work was led by the Trust's Senior Science and Policy Officer Darryl Cox, who said: "Redeveloping Bee kind has been a collaborative effort involving a lot of people, and the result is an exceptional educational resource that people across the country can use to help bumblebees and other pollinators survive and thrive."

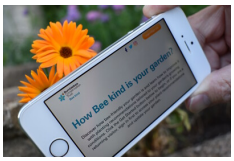
The Bumblebee Conservation Trust has created Bee kind for UK-wide use through the charity's Pollinating the Peak project, supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Jonathan Platt, Head of the National Lottery Heritage Fund East Midlands, said: "I'm delighted we have been able to support Pollinating the Peak thanks to the generosity of National Lottery players. Bee kind is an important resource which will enable us all to turn our love for bumblebees into action – creating havens for bumblebees in our gardens and green spaces whatever their size."

Pollinating the Peak is taking action for bumblebees in the Peak District and Derbyshire, including by encouraging people to use Bee kind to create more nectar-rich habitat in their gardens and communities.

Bumblebee populations have crashed and two species have become extinct in the UK during the last 80 years. For information about the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, see bumblebeeconservation.org.

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