Regaining Paradise?
Sustainability in the Early Years
ECEY6005
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By Nathan Barker



Discover

Growing up I always had the opportunity to go exploring in wildlife and benefit from its glorious achievements. I grew up in Bridgend, where my parents had a small holding of land and fields. I was always out exploring and using some of my five senses; smelling everything, tasting the fresh bramble bush fruits when they ripened every summer and listening to the train that went passed every 30mins. However, I did struggle with how natural everything was compared to the other side of local area, where there were flowers, scrubs and trees for miles. My life is always busy, 7 days a week. Besides teaching, being secretary for my local social club and running my own small tea business, I do find it hard to keep on top of the daily routines.





However, Sunday morning I do wake up early and have time in my local walled secret garden. A special place that is peaceful and beautiful. Being with nature and taking time to reflect on the week and weekend I have had, helps me relax before starting a busy week of daily obligations again. Starting the John Muir award as part of my assignment has given me that boost to really go back to basics and be at one with nature and allow my skills and knowledge to explore and find out what more is around me and its purpose towards sustainability.



Discover the area…

In Beddau, Llantrisant and surrounding areas we are very lucky with the seasons., especially summer. For us, it is a sun-catch which allows my garden and local area to flourish.
Spring time, the area is bursting with colour and has the most wonderful smells of different flowers. We are very fortunate that we have a herb healing community and a medical facility with garden herbs and flowers. It was built to support locals with knowledge and supply them with the necessary herbs if needed. Our area is big on Herbalism.
A evening stroll through this pleasant garden is a picture of health and beauty. The nature that lives here is exquisite. Throughout the garden there are bowls of water for not only pets, but water for the rapidly growing population of hedgehogs in our area.

By looking and exploring my area more and taking in more knowledge of it's unique rarities, has allowed me to get out more with my family and embrace what nature has to offer, and supporting where we can.





Literally a 5-minute walk from my home, is this beautiful landscape that backs onto the Cwm Quarry. An area where mining was and is important. Our community thrives on historical moments and keeping life simple and letting nature make it's way around every corner of our lives to embrace it's true colours and beauty.

There is a wildflower seed-bomb evening that takes place every year locally, and it allows people and young children to sprinkle and have their input on the local community. The local farmer which owns this land, has allowed this momentous evening to take place for over 23 years.

Having bees and other insects that help our environment, supports our cultural beliefs too. People take for granted what nature naturally does for our environment.

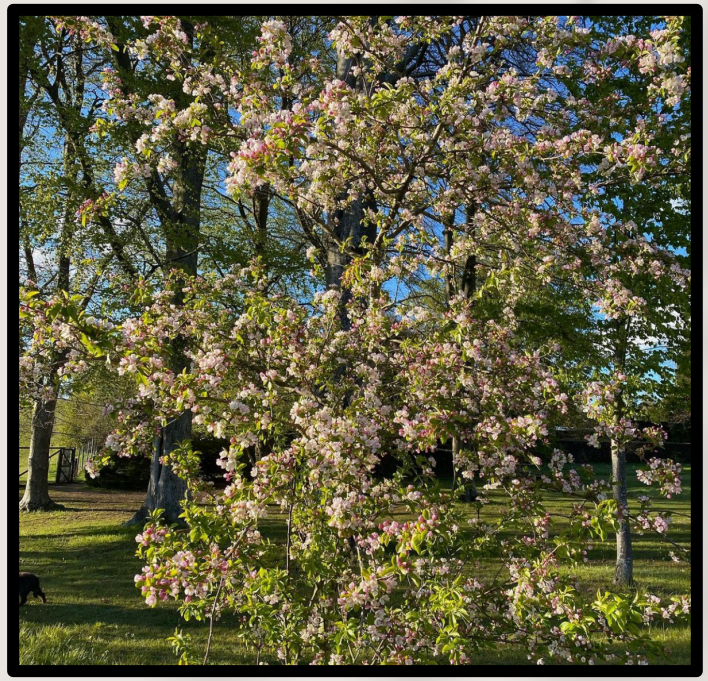








Having Halli in our lives, has made us take more walks daily. We really do live in a picturesque area, full of wildlife and huge potential to support sustainability. I have spent many afternoons and early evenings painting down in these woods.









Explore…



My wild area, west of my garden.
I do love a Sunday morning foraging
through my garden.

My garden is an area where wildlife and especially bees visit daily. When I moved here, I made sure that I always maintained and managed, to keep and ensure the the circle of life would continue. I planted more bee friendly flowers and scrubs to enrich the environment. This is the west side of my home, an area we planned to develop on, but at present is a wildlife sanctuary.



People come and reflect here..

This is the front and east side of my home. A place where friends and family when they visit take time to visit and reflect on their day.
My garden has always been my sanctuary. Exploring my garden and taking a moment reflect, I knew that my garden was a safe environment, especially for my young nephew and nieces. It has always been a place that friends and family come and have a moment to themselves. My father is a keen gardener and helped me form this beautiful garden, he has always been one for making sure that everyone does their part for the future and sustaining what has been given to us.







Wildlife in my garden and around the corner from my home…

We are very fortunate around our area to have a lot of movement of wildlife.

The snail and butterfly was a quick picture moment during lockdown, especially that this was the butterfly that was grown in our nursery before the restrictions took over. The squirrel was a Sunday coffee morning moment where I managed to take a photo of him borrowing one of my clothes pegs!



My local walled secret garden. A place of peace and pure tranquility.

I visit this garden most days with Halli and it has every flower, and scrub you can think of. The locals really do look after this area and thankfully it locked of an evening so it can not get destroyed by passing public.





In my local area, these areas are well-used by the public. There is an enclosure by the woodland that was setup for the local nursery. The nursery use it a lot doing the spring and summer months, to allow the early years pupils to explore, forage for different minibeasts and habitats. The nursery also plant new trees next the field every year, after the local fund raiser.








Too bee-or-
not-to-bee

Bee-autiful: 3 Wildflowers that bees love



It is true that bees need our help and support in matters of nature. Most bees will visit most wildflowers to rest their weary wings and power up on their pollen that is on offer, but just like us, bees have their favourite flowers.

1. Foxglove:

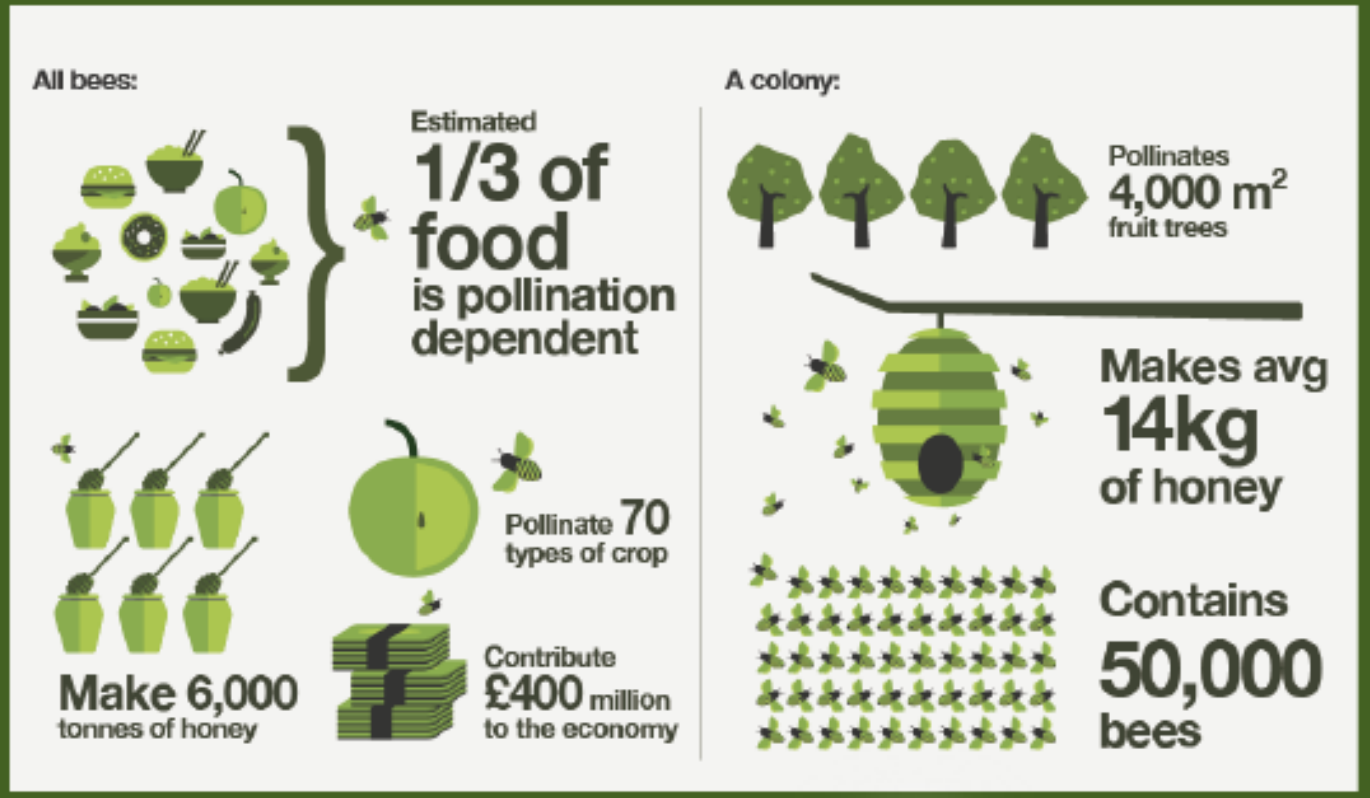
I am so glad bee's love Foxgloves. I am a fan of Foxglove too but presently is a flower I do not have in my garden. Foxgloves are biennial wildflowers that when sown will reward you with blooms for two whole years.

2. Bluebell:

Bees can fit perfectly into their bells and benefit from a few moments of respite to get revitalised for their next trip. I see this flower everywhere while walking Halli, all along the side streets and edges of the country paths, especially walking up the Cwm Quarry and side fields.

3. Oxeye Daisy:

Oxeye Daisy is a very welcome sight and a clear signpost for bees. This is a flower I see time and time again when travelling around Beddau.



Some BEE Facts!



Bee Facts for Children

- Beekeepers use smoke to calm bees when they are collecting honey or relocating a hive.
- Bees make honey to feed their young and to have something to eat during the winter.
- Certain species of bees die after stinging because their stinger is attached to their abdomen and is torn when they fly away.
- There are about 20,000 different species of bees in the world.
- The worker bee and the queen bee are both female, but only the queen bee can reproduce. All drones are male.
- Bees store their venom in a sac attached to their stinger and only female bees sting.
- Bees see all colours except the colour


Areas with great potential

Pupil ideas….vision….provision….success

In my school, we had an area where it needed some care and was worth being invested into. The school Eco-Committee and School Council sat down and brainstormed some ideas on why, how and what could happen to this area.





Being a big, local community supported school, our school council and PTA, approached the local authority asking for a grant or ways to fund their project. Being a well-being project that would benefit the early years pupils and others, on how to grow and sown fruit and vegetables, the authority came up with the funding. The work had the green light, and the project was full-steam ahead. The result was breath-taking, the pupils learned so much from being outside in this environment, growing and having that holistic approach.











5-minute walk from my
home was barren land with
huge potential

Community coming together…

The community used this land for various projects and events over the years. But after a few years the area become barren and people had started dumping old pumpkins and rubbish on the land. Though at first, it was a terrible sight to see, the amount of rubbish and pumpkins dumped. A local gardener took it upon himself to ask the land owner if he could clean it up and plants some pumpkins there for the community, and local schools.
To our knowledge the land owner, was over joyed to hear such great ideas and donated the land to the community, for growing and sustainability of life only.
Today, it is the peak moment during September/October where local volunteers come together and support the sales of pumpkins to the local and wider community. All money raised, goes towards the upkeep of the land and the upkeep in the community via planters and community flower beds.










Barbour

The Green Man?





I am a keen gardener and I am also a volunteer in the secret garden a few streets down. Many of my plants and flowers, end up in my local community garden and other peoples gardens. I always grow to many, but I believe the more flowers and plants I grow, the more bees I will get in my garden.









Looking at the sun…

Like wildflowers we must stand tall and embrace the sun.

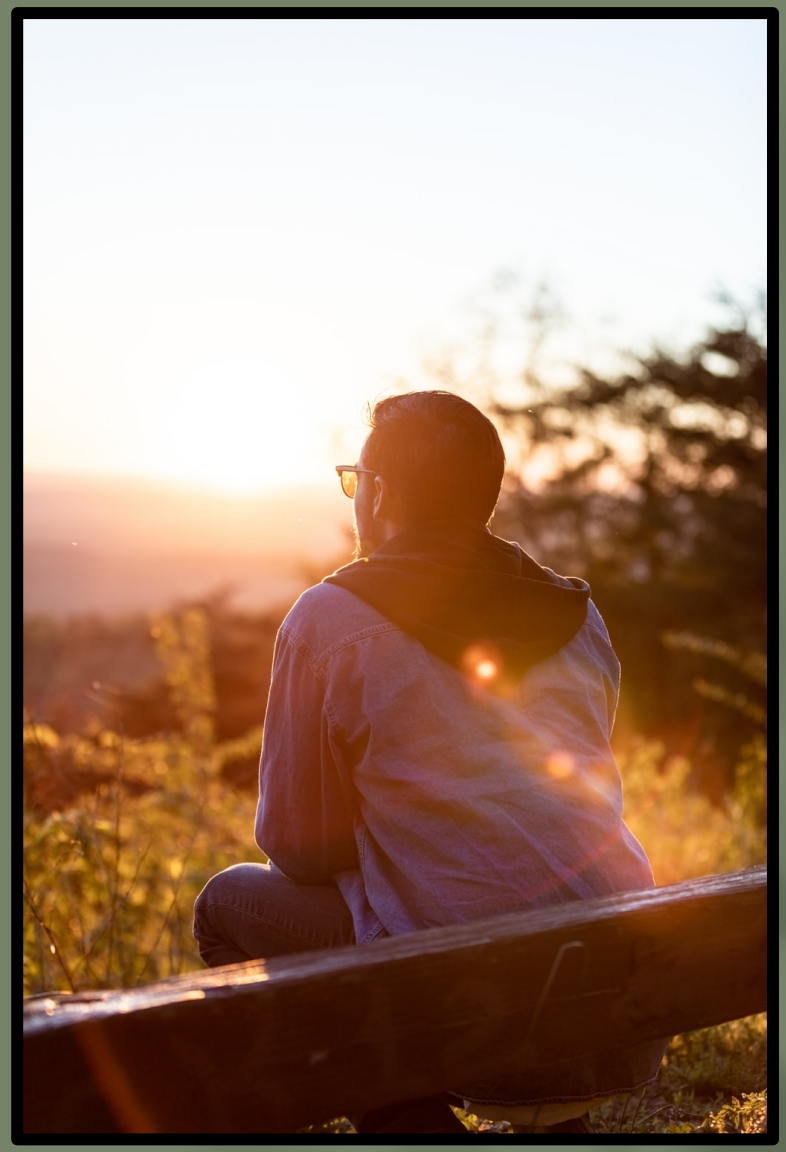
The sun is our companion, a source of life and inspiration.

We must allow ourselves to breed and flourish in places that others see fit, just waiting on the wind to take us on our next journey.

We are like red-hot sparks, that's looking for a flame, trying to spread our love and find a place to call home.

It's not what you got, it's the welcome you give.

By Nathan Barker



Me on top of Cwm Quarry

Conserve

This award made me realize that I need to get back outdoors and explore more in my local area. Through I have knowledge of where things are in my area, there is many areas I am still yet to discover. Having this mind set, and talking to my partner, I decided to add some extra additional pieces to the woodland in our local area, with permission, to create a 'Bug Hotel'. We had many wooden pallets and old doors from March when we changed everything over and I saw the opportunity.

My partner and I, spent all weekend building this bug hotel and the result really paid off, especially with bee friendly flowers planted on top. Furthermore, I decided to add an additional item to my tea collection, when people ordered my collection of tea, they would also receive a box of Wildflower Seed Bombs, as an added extra, eco-friendly, which can allow them to spread the word and ensure sustainably is kept.









Reflection..

On reflection, the John Muir award has opened my eyes, to really take hold of those moments and use it wisely outdoors with mother nature.
Our environment is in need of support and scaffolding. To sustain our environment, we should keep on supporting locally and keeping live essentials as eco-friendly as possible.
Children should be outdoors in all weathers to experience the true beauty of their environment and its paramount importance's it has over us.
By discovering it, exploring it, conserving it and share the experiences with others to embrace the position and it’s importance of sustainability.
I am keen to share my thoughts and newfound knowledge with others, so they can see the simplicity and share the benefits, especially when working in the field of Early Years and Education.

