

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground and background. On the left, a green tree and a purple flower stand on a hill. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The sky is composed of horizontal bands of blue and white. The title text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Beautiful Butterflies and Buzzing Bees

Jayne Llewellyn
#JohnMuirAward



Our outdoor learning environment..... The school ground

This part of the school ground has been very overgrown and has not been used for anything for a long time. Therefore, I have chosen this area to create a more sustainable area where children can learn about the growth of vegetables, the birds, and creatures that live in the area, especially the butterflies and bees.

The local area around the school



Margam Park



Kenfig Nature Reserve



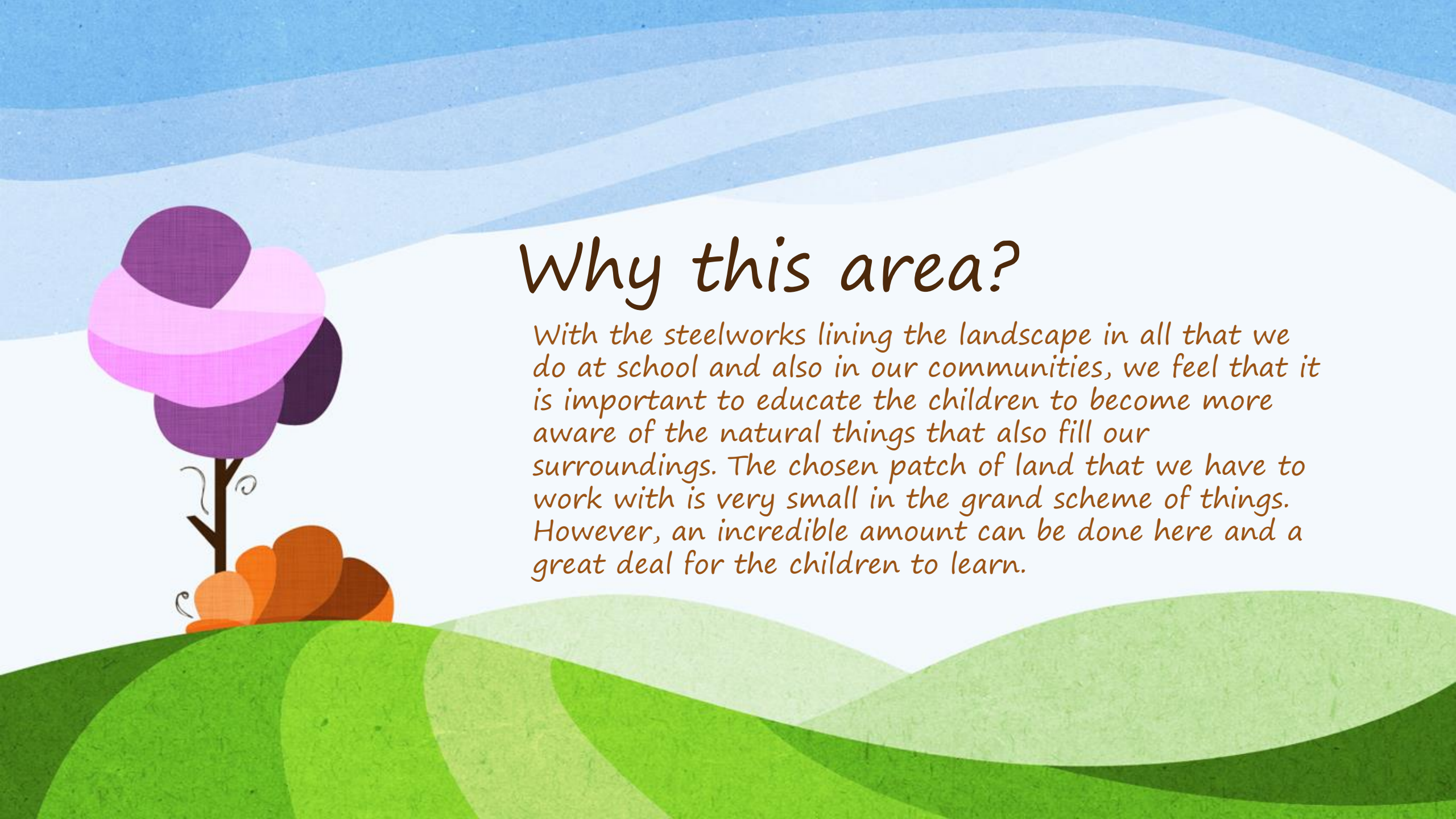
Margam Park

As of right now, Margam Park offers the naturalist a pattern of plant habitats whose existence may be explained by agricultural management and landscape planting. A variety of landscapes, including broad-leaved, coniferous, and mixed forests, scrub, grassland, bog, lakes, and streams, contrast sharply with Port Talbot's industrial setting.



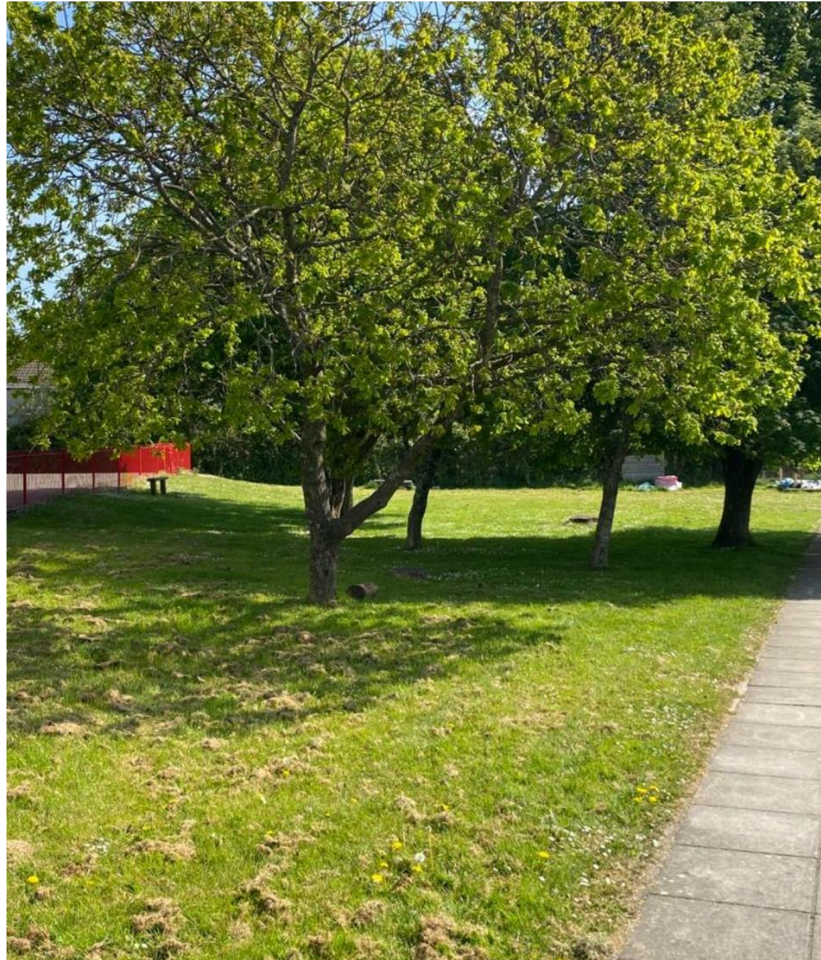
Kenfig Nature Reserve

With all the unique flora, birds, and insects that are dependent on this type of coastal habitat for their survival, this National Nature Reserve is one of Wales' top sand-dune reserves. The largest lake in Glamorgan, Kenfig Pool, is close to the reserve. The remainder of the reserve is made up of a sizable area of sand dunes that stretch to the coast and Sker Point and provide wonderful views of the Gower across Swansea Bay. The steelworks and industrial region of Port Talbot are visible on the reserve's western horizon, an odd juxtaposition that only helps to emphasise the reserve's natural beauty.

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground and background. The sky is composed of horizontal bands of blue and white. On the left, a tree with a dark brown trunk and a large, rounded canopy of purple and pink leaves stands on a small patch of orange and brown ground. The overall style is flat and graphic.

Why this area?

With the steelworks lining the landscape in all that we do at school and also in our communities, we feel that it is important to educate the children to become more aware of the natural things that also fill our surroundings. The chosen patch of land that we have to work with is very small in the grand scheme of things. However, an incredible amount can be done here and a great deal for the children to learn.

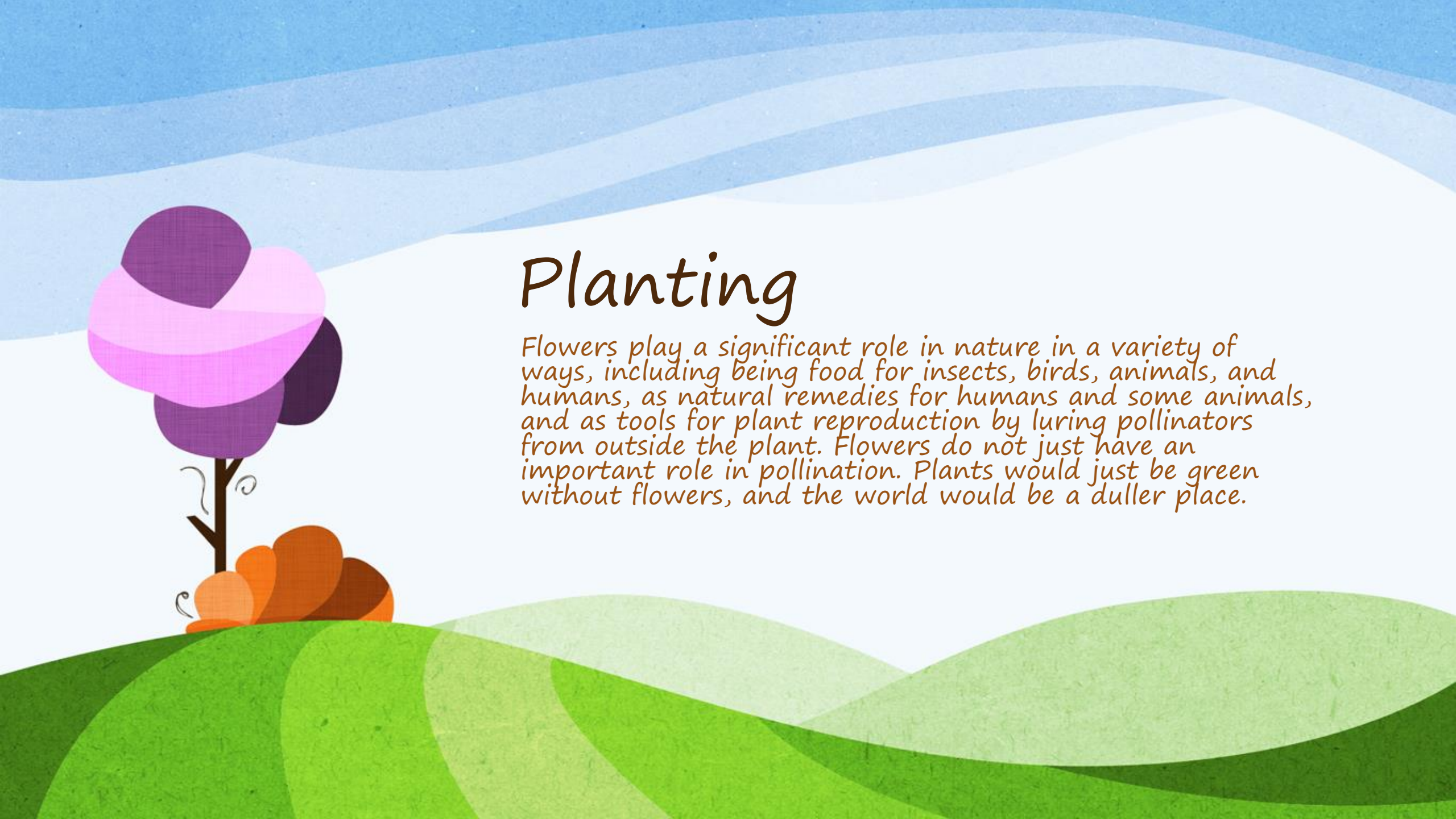


Over the fence

The children left the school yard to explore the immediate surroundings. They remained within the school grounds, however, it was not a part of the school where they would spend a great deal of time. They explored the trees and the textures of the leaves, they also studied the plants and flowers that grew there.

Exploring





Planting

Flowers play a significant role in nature in a variety of ways, including being food for insects, birds, animals, and humans, as natural remedies for humans and some animals, and as tools for plant reproduction by luring pollinators from outside the plant. Flowers do not just have an important role in pollination. Plants would just be green without flowers, and the world would be a duller place.



Are flowers important?

Not only is the natural history of pollination intriguing. It is a crucial ecological survival mechanism. The human race and all terrestrial ecosystems on earth would not exist without pollinators. Additionally, the removal of pollutants and carbon dioxide from the air depends on flowers. We planted seeds for flowers and herbs to grow in our new garden space.

Including the community

Learning about the importance of planting flowers and the joy the children found in it, we planted sunflowers for the children to take home. They enjoyed sharing their knowledge with their families and also watching their seedlings grow.





Home – school task

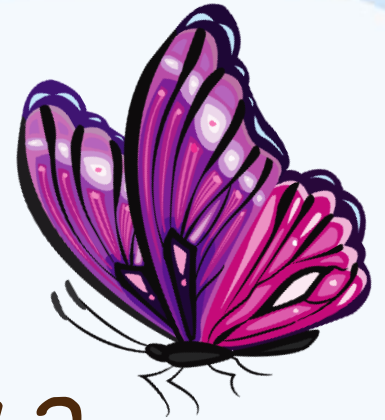
These are just some
of the successful
sunflower stems
that will grow into
flowers to feed the
butterflies and bees
at home with the
children.

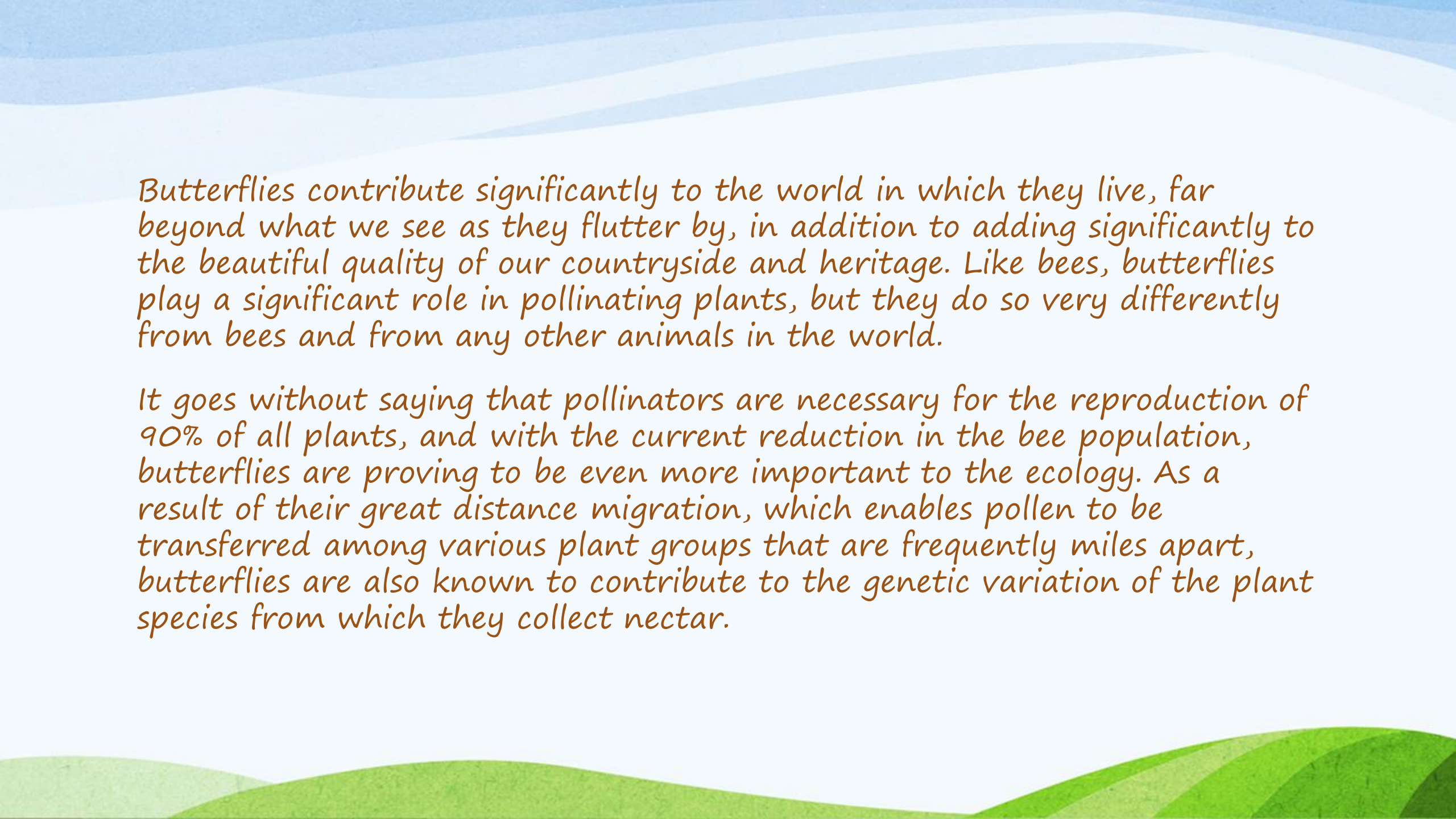
Flowers



A lovely flower bed has been planted to encourage bees and butterflies into the area and the children take responsibility to water and take care of it.

Why are butterflies
and bees important?





Butterflies contribute significantly to the world in which they live, far beyond what we see as they flutter by, in addition to adding significantly to the beautiful quality of our countryside and heritage. Like bees, butterflies play a significant role in pollinating plants, but they do so very differently from bees and from any other animals in the world.

It goes without saying that pollinators are necessary for the reproduction of 90% of all plants, and with the current reduction in the bee population, butterflies are proving to be even more important to the ecology. As a result of their great distance migration, which enables pollen to be transferred among various plant groups that are frequently miles apart, butterflies are also known to contribute to the genetic variation of the plant species from which they collect nectar.

Butterflies and Bees

Beautiful butterflies

Buzzing bees

They fly through the air

They glide in the breeze

They make glorious honey

They cocoon when they're young

Who knew butterflies and bees

Could have so much fun?

Bees produce honey

They come out in the sun

Who knew that the queen

Was the main one?

They're generally friendly

Just doing their thing

If you harass them,

They'll give you a sting

Butterflies are pretty

They have lots of colours

Fluttering through the sky

They have magic powers

You may find them dancing

Amongst the wildflowers

Beautiful butterflies

Buzzing bees

They're not gnats

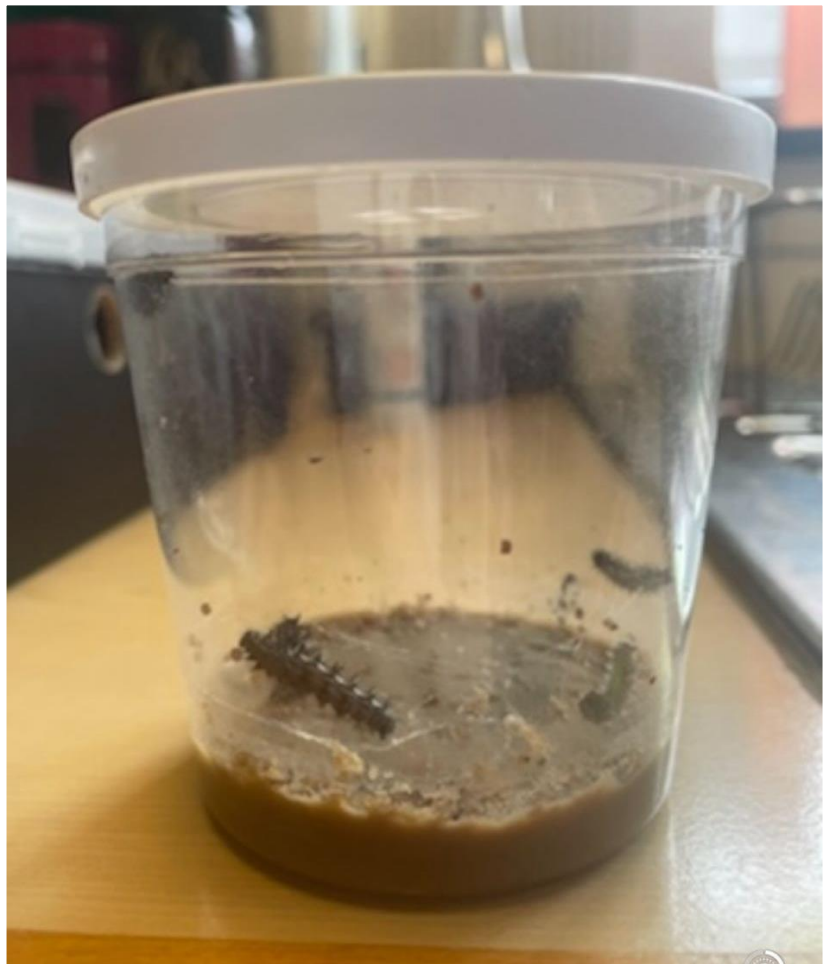
They're not fleas

No!

They're beautiful butterflies

They're buzzing bees.

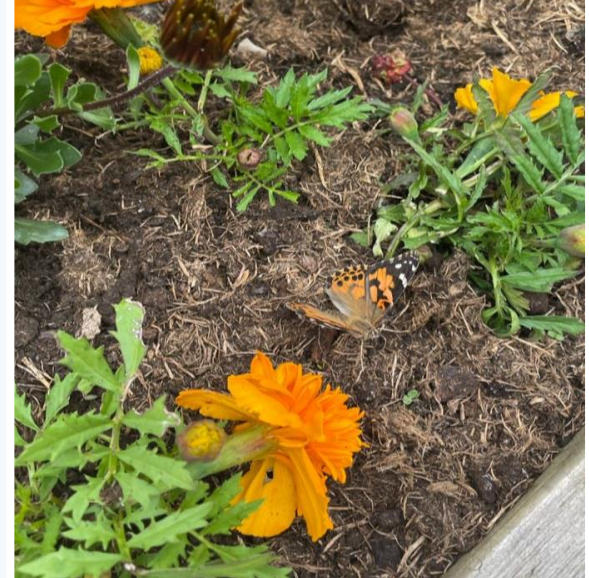




Butterfly fly away!

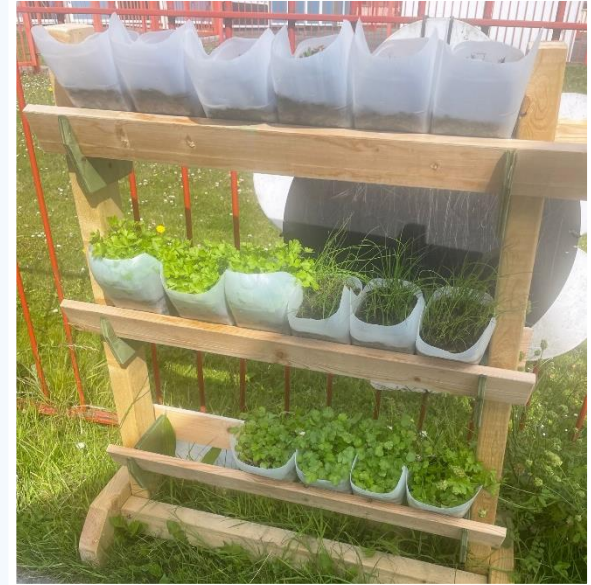
To help with increasing the number of butterflies in our school yard we helped transform caterpillars into butterflies. Doing this helped give the children an understanding of how important they are in our world. They now know that when they see their beautiful wings flutter by that they are busy and hard at work.



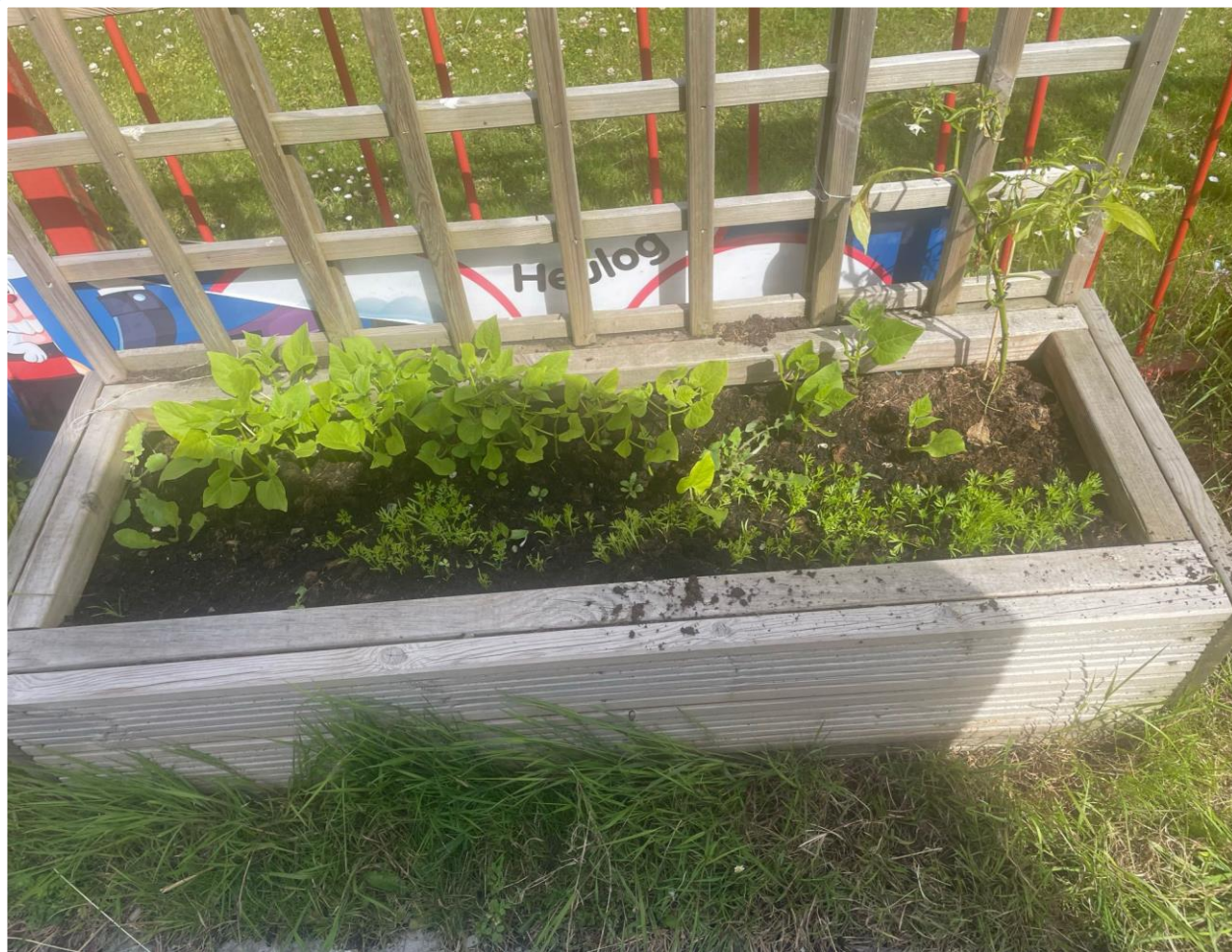


Once the butterflies were ready we released them into the garden, onto the flowers for them to begin their pollinating journey. But not before one landed to say goodbye!

Herb garden



In our new sustainable area in the yard we are not only planting flowers to feed the birds and butterflies we are also growing food for human consumption. We planted a herb garden using recycled milk bottles and placed them on a stand in the area. These are used in the recipes used in the nursery, the children take responsibility for watering the herb garden and cutting the amount needed for cooking. Parents and friends of the nursery are also invited to cut what they like and take some home and use.



Vegetable patch

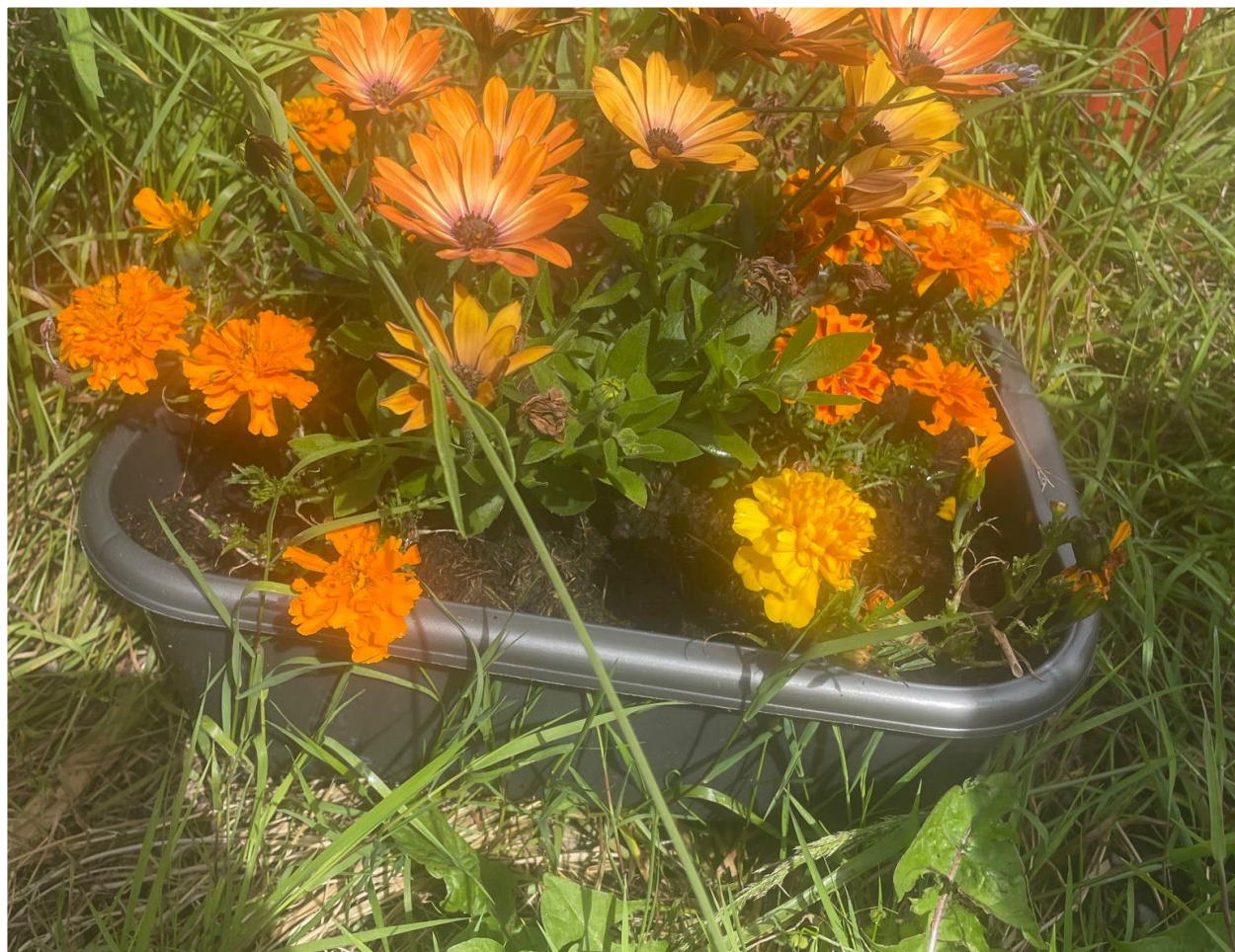
Vegetables are now also being grown in the area. Carrots, beans, radish, and tomatoes are all being grown and will be enjoyed by the children once they are ready. Again the children take responsibility for watering and the upkeep of the vegetable patch.



Strawberries

Strawberries provide almost 150 percent of the daily vitamin C needs of the body in just one serving. This is crucial for assisting the body in warding off illness and infection, including the flu and the common cold. Additionally, vitamin C functions as an antioxidant, fighting off free radicals that harm sound DNA. Therefore, it was decided that strawberries would also be grown in the newly developed area.

It has been fascinating for the children to see flowers turn into strawberries. And listening to them telling their parents "this flower will be a strawberry next week and I am going to eat it".



Anything can be a planter!

As previously mentioned, milk bottles were used as planters in the herb garden area. Old washing-up bowls were also used to plant flowers low down on the ground to encourage other mini beasts to feed. Planting an area does not necessarily need to be fancy and expensive, recycle and reuse!

Bug Hotel



This planter has not been used for some time, after researching the area with the children they discovered that there was a number of mini beasts and creature in the area.



Therefore a bug hotel was decided. Although this one was a purchased one, the children are using this as an example for a home-school task to create their own out of reusable materials.

These are just some of the birds that are
in the local area



White Throated-Sparrow



House Sparrow



Robin

Birds

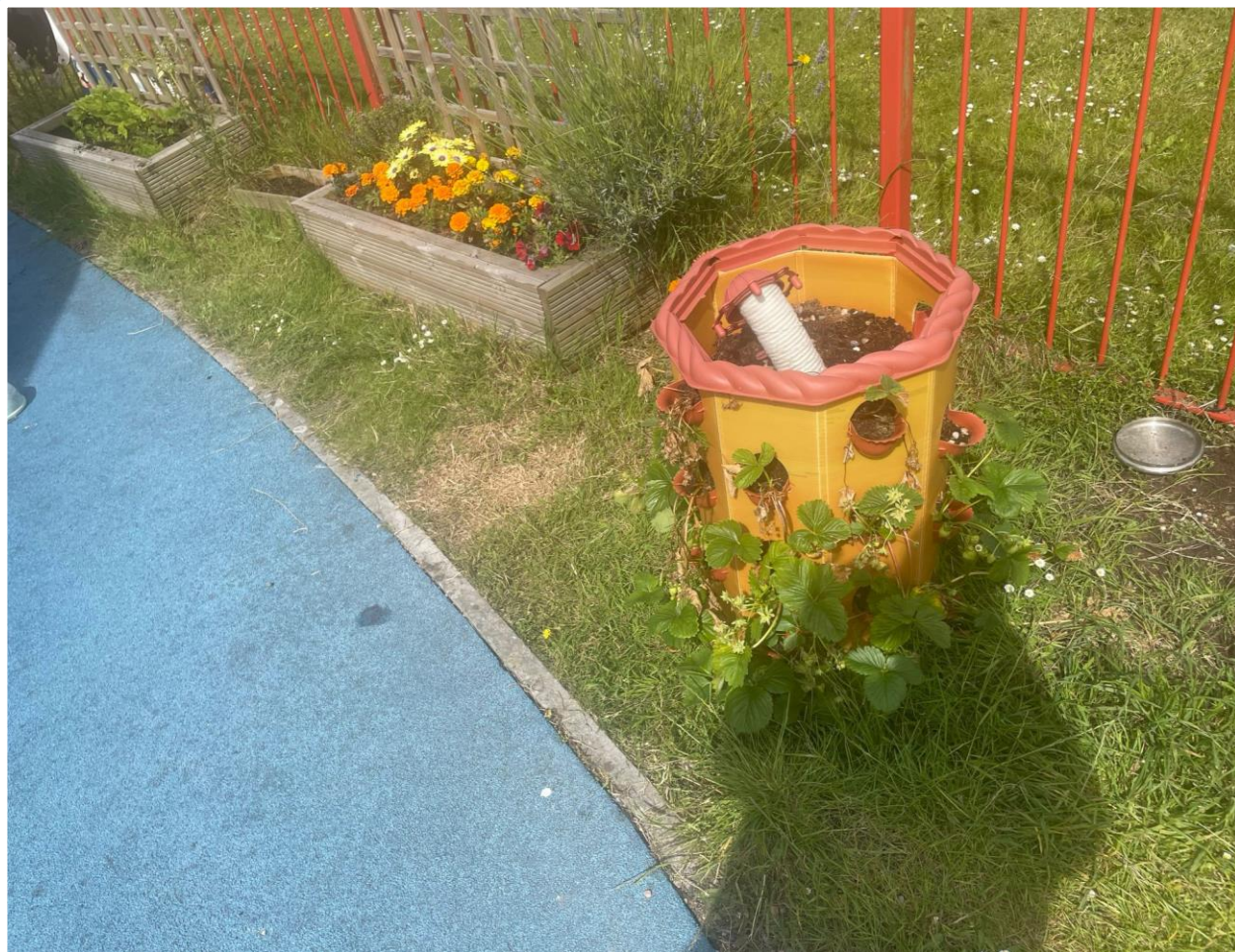


This bird house has been added to the building to encourage more birds to the area. Under the umbrella, bird feeders will be added to each corner. As the umbrella is high they will not be disturbed by the children playing.



Compost

In a nursery setting the children eat a lot of fruit, before the John Muir award the fruit leftovers such as peelings and waste. Therefore it was decided that a compost bin would also be added to the area. The children learn that the leftovers may be a waste for us humans but for the plants and it is delicious goodness!



Completed area



We welcome the change!



Before



After



What's next?

The next stage of making the nursery more sustainable is to continue with the development outside of the fence. Vegetable patches and a greenhouse are in discussions to be placed here. The children will then grow their own fruit and vegetables. Wildflower patches are also going to be planted so butterflies and bees have even more places to feed and thrive.



Keep worms damp beneath the soil
Let the caterpillars nibble and grow
Leave some dandelions for the bees
Let ladybirds fly away home;
Don't squish the ants or beetles
Give creepy crawlies a helping hand
They may be little and some are icky
But they're still a vital part of the land



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Final thought