





Wales

A country full of hidden delights,
From storms at sea, to stary nights.
Wales is the land I wish to reside.
With its vastness where it's easy to hide.
From its mountain tops, glistening in snow,
To its sun-drenched valleys, gleaming in its glow.

Of stories of old and long-gone times,
Of the battles of heroes and heroines alike,
The fearless courage to attain their goal.

The land of the dragon,
The fire within our soul,
The place where I am blessed,
To call, my home.

By Linsey Smith



Wales is such a beautiful vast wild place to explore. With its coastlines, mountains and woodlands. However, it is also essential that we look closer to home.

So,

Discover



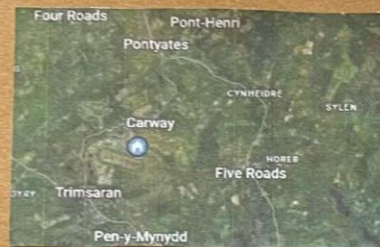
The area which I have chosen to discover and explore is our back garden.



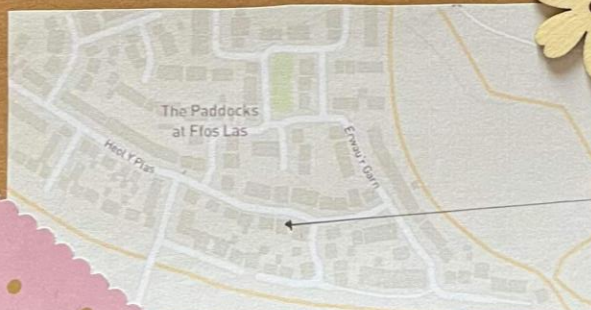
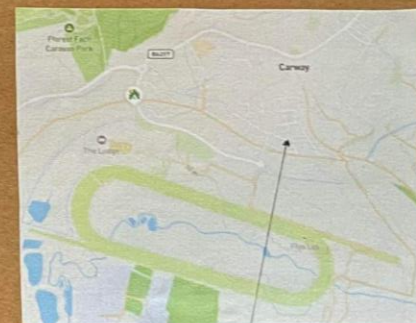
It is my sanctuary, a place in which I can sit and experience its calming and recharging effect on my physical and mental health.



Location



Ffos Las is located in the rural county of Carmarthenshire, in Southwest Wales. It is central to both Llanelli and Carmarthen, in the small village of Carway. Surrounded by the Gwendraeth Valley and its farming communities.



HOME



Gwendraeth Valley



Ffos Las Racecourse



Coed Ffos Las Memorial Monument

Located within the Gwendraeth Valley, near Ffos Las Racecourse and the Woodland Trust's Centenary Wood Coed Ffos Las and Monument.

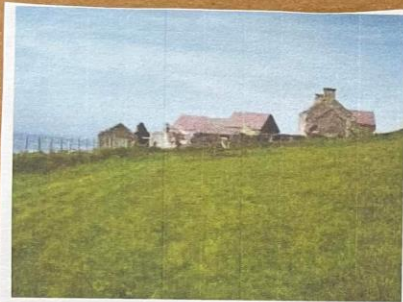


Woodland Trust Coed Ffos Las

History of the Area



Ffos Las or the 'Blue Trench'
is the name of the farm
which existed on this site,
prior to its transformation
during the open cast mining
era, in 1983.



Ffoslas Farm



Ffoslas Farm

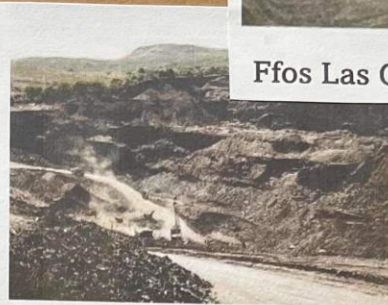




Operating between 1983 and 1997, Ffos Las Mine was known as one of the largest open cast coalmines in Europe, reaching depths of 500 feet deep.



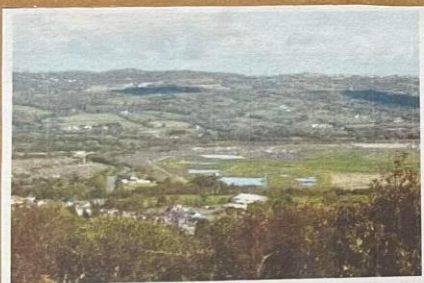
Ffos Las Open Cast Mine



Ffos Las Open Cast Mine



In 2009, due to the collapse of the mining industry and the infilling of the former opencast mine, this natural environment, became better known as Ffos Las Racecourse.



Construction of Ffos Las Racecourse



Ffos Las Racecourse

Explore



BIRDS



Birds of Prey

Buzzard



The buzzard is a large dark brown bird of prey, its underside of its wings is a pale cream colour. Its call sounds like that of a cat. Due to building work being carried out near their habitat, there has been a reduction of sightings this year, compared to other years. Usually witnessed throughout the day until dusk.

Red Kite



The Red Kite is smaller than the Buzzard. It has a recognisable forked tail, and its colour resembles that of a fox. It has a yellow beak and feet, with blue-white nape of the neck, head and eyes. They have a very clear and distinctive call, that is piecing whistle that descends into a sound that resembles a 'pluu' sound. Like the Buzzard, the Red Kite can be witness throughout the day.

Tawny Owl



There is currently a pair of Tawny Owls located within close proximity to our home. This can be distinguished by the call of both the male and female. The customary 'ke-wick' sound of the female and the 'hoo-hoo' response of the male can be heard most nights around midnight. Due to the lack of artificial light, we have been unable to see them.

Medium to Large Birds

Crow



The crow has a deep, rough and throaty 'Cawing' call. Their plumage is a glossy black. They can usually be seen on neighbouring roofs usually in the early mornings and later in the evening.



Magpie



The Magpie is an extremely noise bird that chatters. It has black plumage, however its wings have an iridescent purplish-blue sheen and its tail is a glossy green colour. These can be observed numerous times of the day, in both the garden and surrounding roofs.

Cuckoo



Usually heard in the distance in the mornings and early evenings, is the unmistakable 'Coo-coo' call of the Cuckoo.



Black Bird



With a 'chuk' throaty sounding call, we are blessed to hear the singing of the Black Bird all day, every day. A dark brown/black colour plumage with a orange beak, they can be witness every morning and evening searching for worms in the lawn.



Jay



Usually observed at a fleeting pass, as it screeches through our garden towards the copse at the back of housing estate. Can sometimes be heard in the distance. It has a buff-coloured body, a black moustache, white and black wings with a vivid blue patch.



Song Thrush



With a flute-like tone that is repeated 2- 4 times to create a melody, the Song Thrush can be heard in our garden during the summer. It has an upper body of brown and a cream and brown speckled chest.

Collared Dove



Usually visible on our fence. A 'cooing' call can be hear. Pale grey plumage with a black collar.

Small Birds

Skylark



It can usually be seen as a speck in the sky, but its beautiful melody can be heard for the tranquillity of our garden.



Robin



Witnessed everyday in the lawn looking for worms or on the fence singing, this brown plumed bird with its remarkable red and white chest, can be witnessed back and forth to its nest at the foot of the neighbours garden.

Dunnock



Usually see on the garden fence during the daytime. This small grey/brown bird with a grey-blue head can be observed flying in and out of our plant borders.

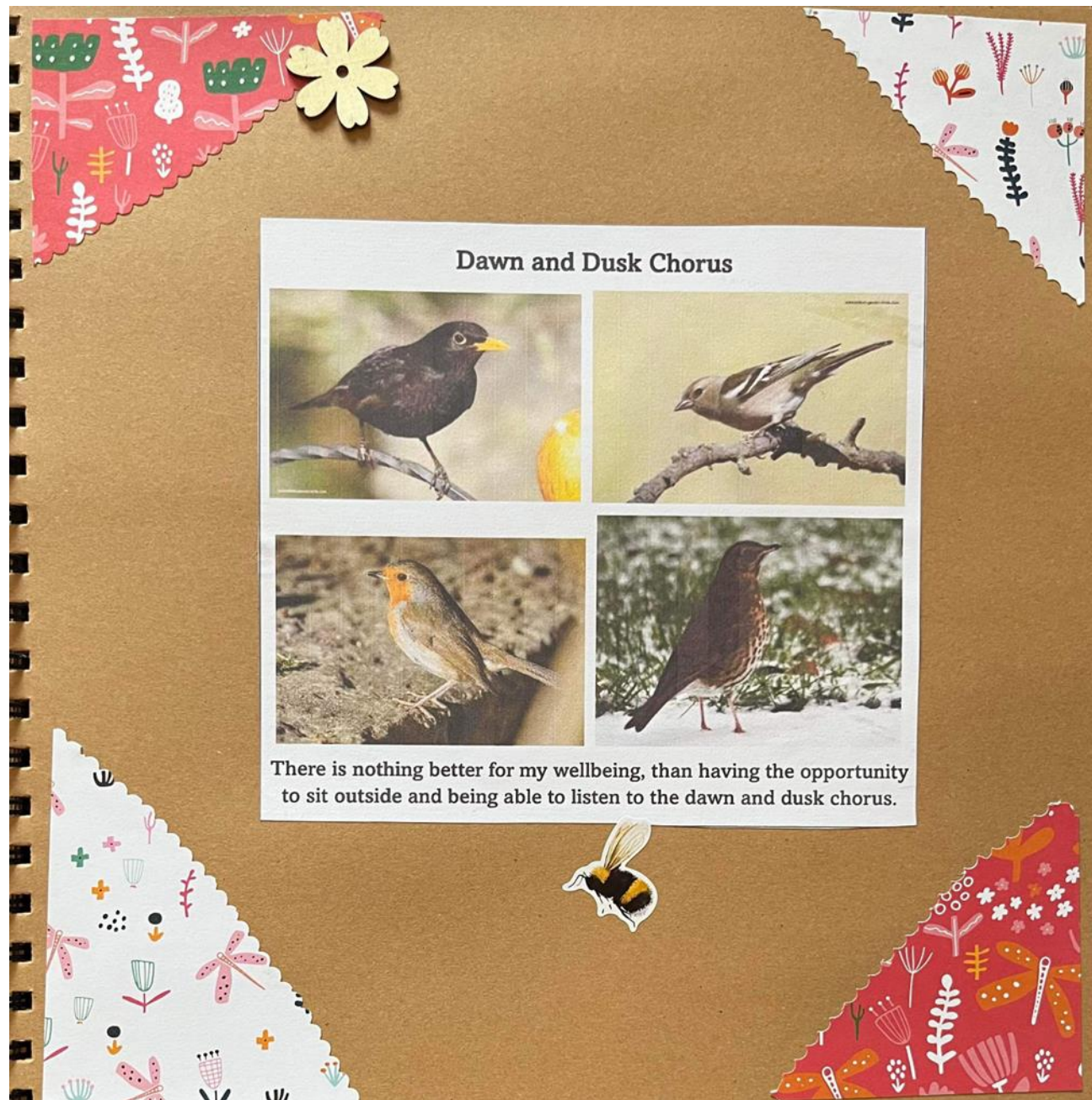
Chaffinch



Both types of Chaffinches can be observed following the example of the dunnock. Their calls resemble a descending rattle.



PLAY





INSECTS



Horse Fly



Due to our location, we are prone during the summer months to witness horse flies within our garden.

Ant



These black ants can usually be found scurrying across the patio.





Froghopper and Cuckoo Spite



Although we have never witnessed the Froghopper bug in our garden, it does however leave its mark. Every year, cuckoo spit can be observed on our Lavender plants. Even though I have the ability to recognise and name this foamy secretion, I have been previously unaware of the identity of the insect which secretes it.



Woodlouse



Earwig



Usually located under the shed and additionally the wood pile.



Worm



Due to the soil conditions within our garden, we have purchased and introduced an additional 100 worms over the past 3 weeks.



Spider



Within our vicinity, we observe numerous types of spider. These can range from Daddy Longlegs, Harvestman spider, Zebra jumping spider, and Orb weaver spider.

Wasp



Wasps can be found quite frequently flying in our garden, usually finding themselves within our home.

Butterflies



Moths



Like the Bee population, there is a decline within the UK Butterfly and Moth population also. Taking time to appreciate our natural space, it has come to my attention the reduced levels of Butterflies and Moths, I have witnessed this year.



Bee



The humming of the Bumble Bee is the highlight of my Spring and Summer. Although our garden consists of a high quantity of Bee Friendly plants, I believe that there is always an opportunity to improve.



Ladybird



Unlike previous years, I have witnessed a reduction of the number of Ladybird this year.

MAMMALS



Shrew



Unfortunately, due to the high volume of cats in the area, the majority of shrews I have observed are deceased.

Grey Squirrel



Often seen most mornings sat on our fence looking in towards the kitchen. However, sightings seem to have reduced since the building work has started.



Hedgehog



We are still yet to see the hedgehog, however, most evening around 10pm, we can hear snuffling and shuffling sounds within our borders.



Common Pipistrelle



Every night these can be witnessed flying around our garden. Usually flying to and from the direction of the copse behind the racecourse.



Rat



Although we have not witnessed these directly, signs have been observed. On removing items from the bottom of the garden, there have been signs of rat activity, these have included seed potatoes and snails.

Fox



Although not sighted within our garden, there is a fox within our local area. It has been witnessed walking up and down the road. In addition, signs can be noticed on black bag rubbish day.



AMPHIBIANS

Toad



Found numerous times in our dogs water bowl and in the shaded areas of our lawn.



REPTILES

Slow Worm



Found in the damp area under the bushes in our boarded. Has been mistaken many a time as a snake.



Common Lizard



Usually seen running along side the house towards the small, decked area attached to our patio. A detached tail has also been witnessed on the patio, as a result of a bird attack.



Flowers



Edibles



Mint



The flowers of the mint plant are very delicate looking, in a purple or pink colour. The leaves are bright green with a fresh flavour. Their taste resembles their leaves, very fresh.

Viola



A happy looking flower, with its variations of purple and yellow. It usually grows on a single stalk and has a 5 petal flower. It has a sweet and floral scent and taste.



Chives



The chive has a very delicate lavender flower, with green leaves. They have a mild onion type flavour.

Rosemary



Rosemary has a pine-like scent, it has a woody stem and pine needle like leaves. It has a very strong woody taste, with hints of lemon and mint.

Marigolds



A gold and bronze coloured flower. Each stem has a solitary flower, which has a warm summer fragrance.

Floral



Pink Climbing Jasmine



The climbing jasmine has the same petal shape and scent as the bush jasmine, however, instead of possessing a wooden branch, the climbing jasmine has a delicate green stem. This stem allows the plant to entwine and climb up a trellis structure.

Lavender



The flowers form a spilt like structure at the top of the stem. Usually arranged in either 6 or 10 blossoms, this flower has a relaxing delicate sweet floral scent.



Sweet Pea



Like the climbing jasmine, the sweet pea has a delicate stem for climbing. Each stem has a singular flower, which is sweetly scented.

Crocasmia



Currently this plant displays a tall green grass like stem. It is fast growing and during the late summer it will start to display bright red trumpet like flowers.





Geraniums



The geraniums have a thick leaf, solid pink flower with a paler pink centre. They have a floral scent that resembles that of roses, but after watering a slight citrus and spicy smell can be smelt.



Allium



We currently have two varieties in our a garden. One is a cascading white flower with a pastel pink edging. And the second resemble blue pompoms. They have a similar scent to violas.

Ivy



A waxy green leafed plant with white vein markings. It has no distanced smell.

Rose Thrift



Grows into little cushions, of green leaves and pink flowers. It has an extremely faint scent.

Carnations



A fringed edged flower, with a vibrant colour. They have green stems and an aroma that resembles cinnamon.

Fuchsias



A bell-shaped flower in purple and cerise. Resemble fairies in a children's book. Although a beautiful flower, they are however scent-less.



Lobelia



With delicate vivid blue coloured flowers, lobelia's have a pungent herbal scent.

Bamboo



A very tall grass with a wood stem, it has a fresh and woody smell. Its texture is smooth and uniform.



Shrubs

White Bush Jasmine



A delicate 5 petaled flower on a hardy wooden branch. It has a very power and rich sweet floral scent.

Dwarf Conifer



An evergreen bush with sharp and prickly needle type leavers and a pine scent. At the top of each branch a tiny pinecone can be found.

St Johns Wort



A yellow 5 petaled flower which grows on a thick branched shrub. It has a peculiar smell, resembling a wet dog.

Conserve

The Issue

Although there are numerous sensory experiences within my garden, there is however an area which needs addressed.

Due to the soil quality, the bottom of the garden becomes very waterlogged. To overcome this issue, gravel has been used. Currently this area is very bare and on discovering the reduction of butterfly this year, in addition to the worldwide reduction in the been population, I wish to



How can this issue be rectified?

What is it?

Vertical Garden



What is its purpose?

Pallets



Reclaimed Pallets off the Building Site

A vertical garden enables individuals to utilise areas such as fences or walls when there is a shortage of space or the space available is unsuitable. Involving the erection of a supporting structure, attached to trellis or a wall, it enables plants to be grown in a tiered manner, rather than growing them in the ground.

Due to sustainability purposes, I will be reusing, reclaimed wooden pallets and fabric membrane. The wood stain used will be water based, and environmentally friendly.

Repurpose Items



Wooden Pallet

Acquired from a neighbour.



Fence Posts

Repurposed from an old fence panel.



Bed Slats

Repurposed from an old bedframe.



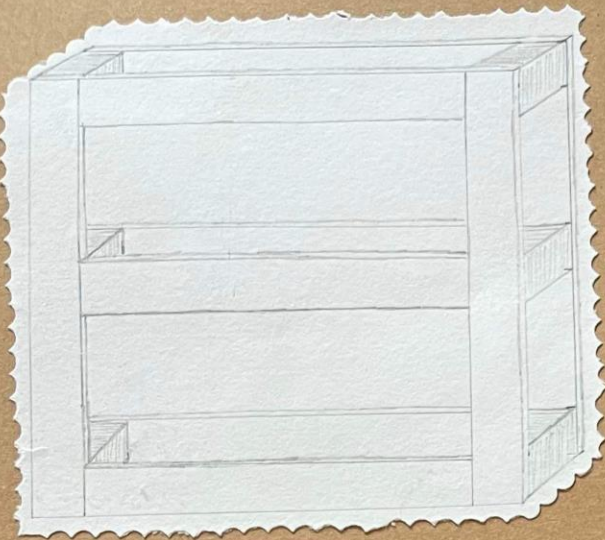
Weed Membrane

Left over from gardening project.

Metal Shepards Crook

Previously used for tealights.





The Construction

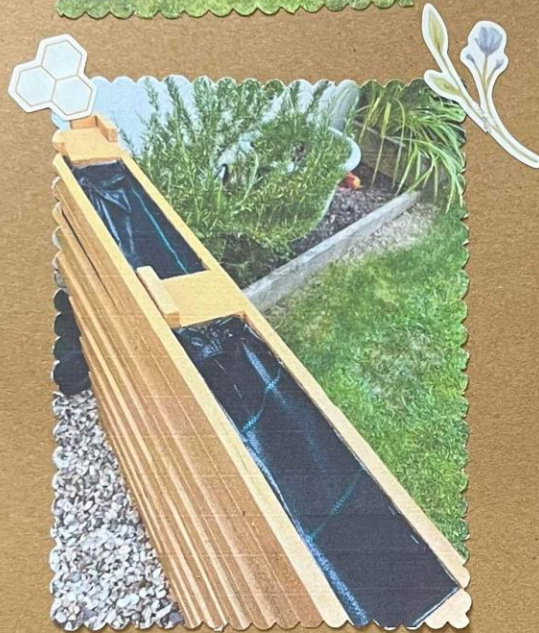


We firstly power-washed the pallet to remove any residue. We then secured the pallet in place with 2 of the 4 fence posts.





Using a water-based wood stain, we painted the pallet and the fence posts. Once dried, we secured the weed membrane to the inside of the pallet using a staple gun.



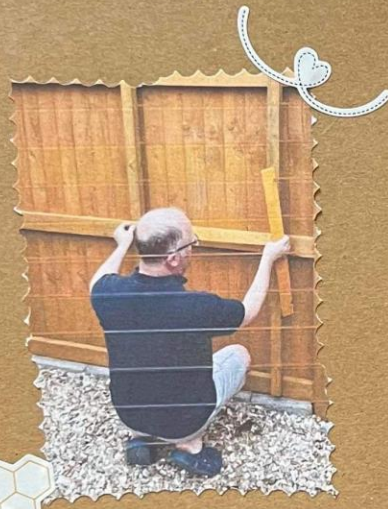
We decided due to the amount of wood remaining after completing the pallet, that we would make an additional vertical garden attached to the fence.



For this, we utilised the 2 remaining fence posts and the bed slats.



We firstly, used the same wood treatment to paint the wood. We then secured each of the fence post vertically to the fence. After cutting grooves into the bed slats, we secured these horizontally to the fence post. Utilising previously used planting troughs, we secured these to the bed slats after they had been planted with the appropriate plants.





When exploring our local area, I became aware that our home is located within the B-Line. Using sites such as Buglife UK, I have been able to determine which species of plants are beneficial to both bees and butterflies.



B-Line Cymru



B-Lines Cymru



Being central to the B-Line, the line in which Bees travel and pollinate. It is essential that we provide Bees with the necessary foliage, plants, and habitat to thrive.



With this information I will be planting the following plants: -













Our 2 completed vertical bee and butterfly friendly gardens.



Bee and Insect Hotel

In addition to building the vertical gardens, I took the opportunity to build a bee and insect hotel for the insects that are attracted to the new plants.

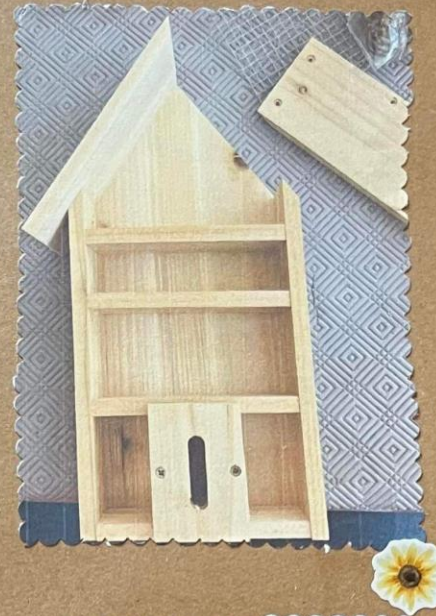
The Construction

To create the bee and insect hotel, I purchased a pre-cut kit.



Firstly, I read the instructions and located the various tools required to assemble the structure.

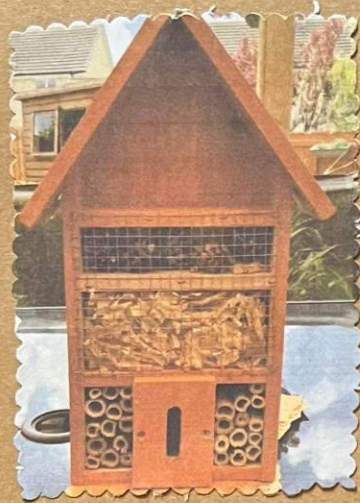
I then proceed to follow the instructions until the structure was complete.







Once the structure had been built, I used the wood stain used previously, to treat the sides and the roof of the bee and insect hotel.



We have decided to locate the bee and insect hotel along the side of our shed. We have chosen this location as it will provide a protective position from the wind and rain.



Share

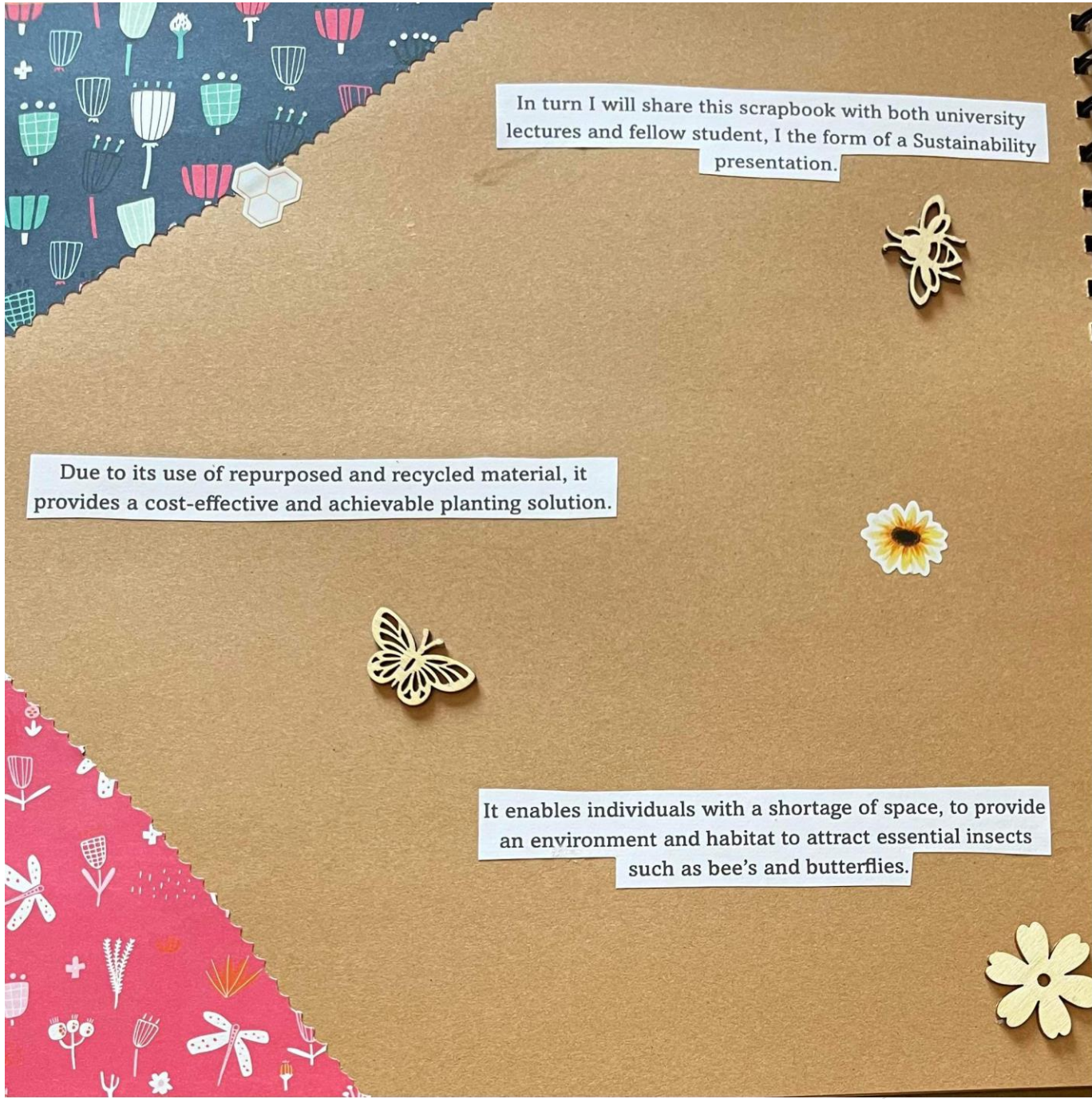
Through this conservation activity, I have had an opportunity to spend time with my family.



We have worked together to make 2 vertical gardens with a pallet, fence posts and bed slats, in addition to a bee and insect hotel.

Family and friends have shown interest in the final product and have inquired on how it has been achieved. I have shared images of the finished product to the neighbour who provided me with the pallet.



The image shows a scrapbook page made of brown cardboard. It has decorative borders: a top-left corner with a dark blue pattern of colorful umbrellas and a bottom-left corner with a pink pattern of white flowers and insects. Three white paper cutouts of insects (a bee, a butterfly, and a flower) are placed on the cardboard. Three white rectangular text boxes are pasted on the page. The right edge of the page shows the spiral binding of a notebook.

In turn I will share this scrapbook with both university lectures and fellow student, I the form of a Sustainability presentation.

Due to its use of repurposed and recycled material, it provides a cost-effective and achievable planting solution.

It enables individuals with a shortage of space, to provide an environment and habitat to attract essential insects such as bee's and butterflies.







