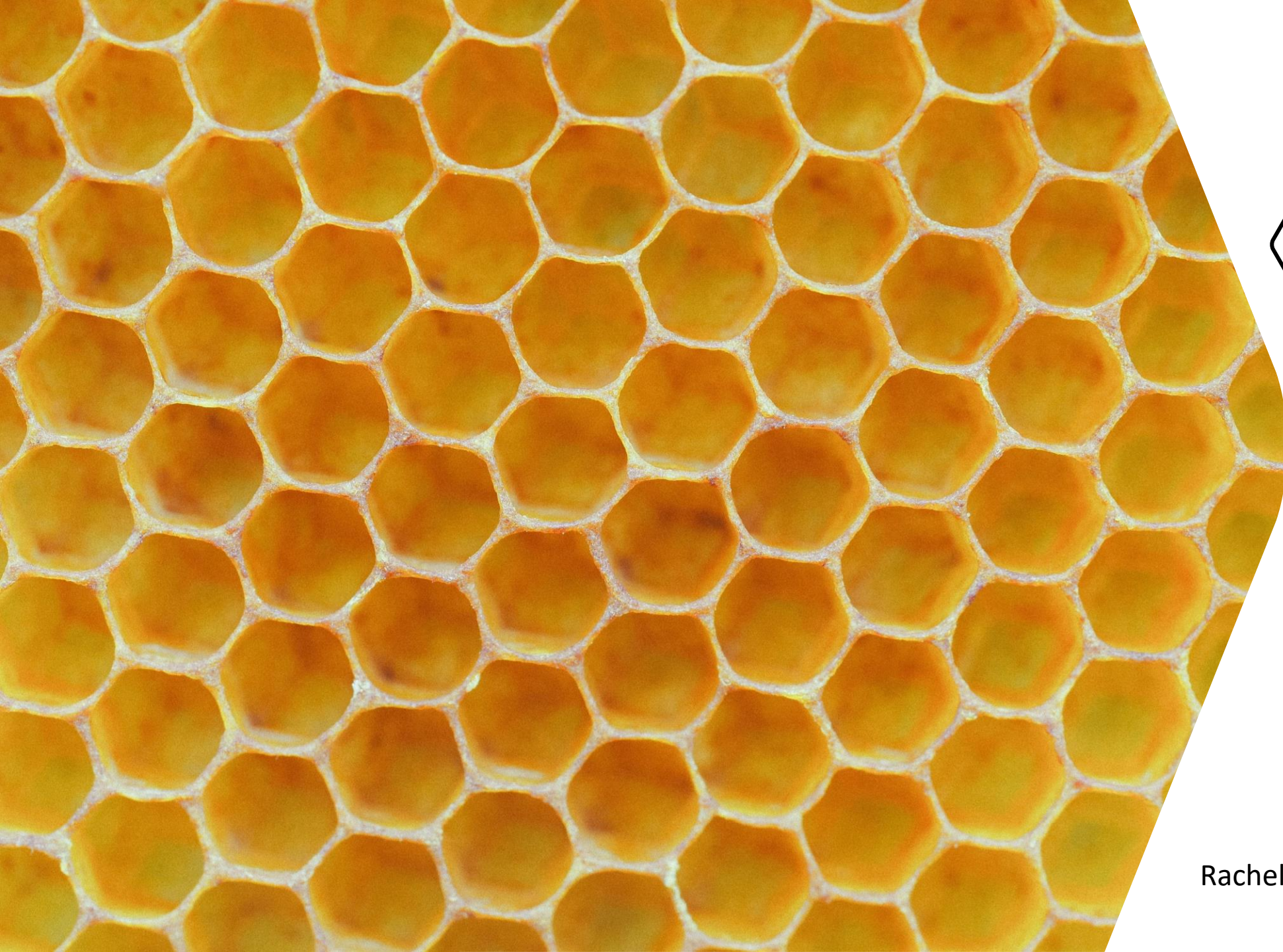


The Bee.

John Muir Award.

Rachel Settatree (2027651)

DISCOVERING.

Originally I had thought about using the outdoor space of the beach or a woodland area near my home, but when I read a little more about John Muir, I realised that the concept of the award was to discover wherever you are.

This made me think about trying to discover what is already going on in my own locality, and what better place to do that than in my own back garden. The back garden was designed and planted up by the previous owners, and it's always fascinated me as to why they chose to do things in certain ways, so this gave me that opportunity to go and discover.

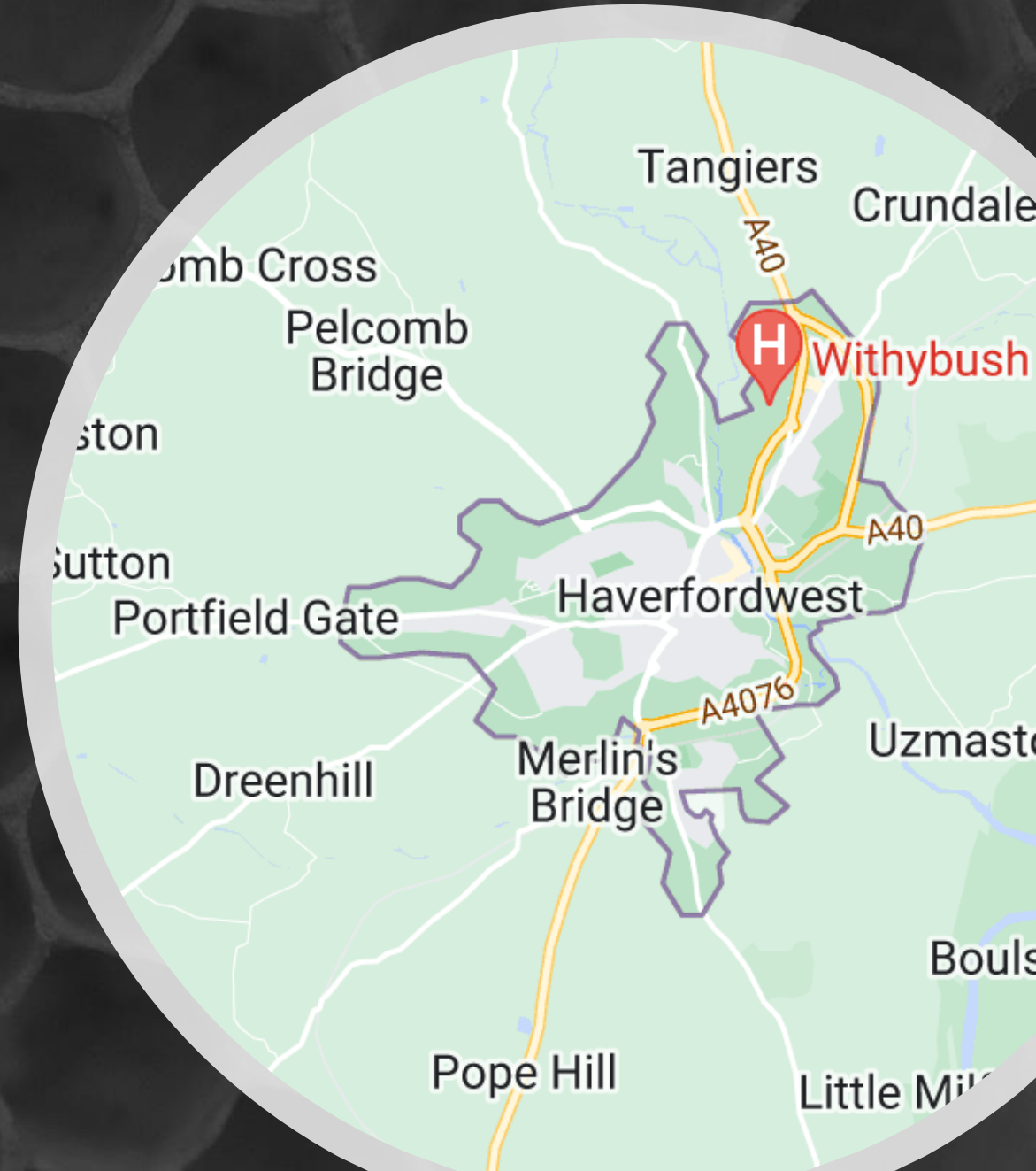


MY LOCALITY.

I live in Pembrokeshire in the town of Haverfordwest. Although town based, we have a lot of green areas and places to walk and visit.

The town is based in and around the castle and we live a short distance up from one of the castle walls where there are numerous walks and for a town, lots of trees and plants.

We are not far from the Cleddau river that runs right through the town center, so although we live in a town it doesn't feel like we do



I made the decision to make my discovery area even smaller and specifically look at this area in my garden, as mentioned before, planted up by previous owners. It's a little away from the main grass area of the garden.





EXPLORING.

Through narrowing my discovery area to a specific area of the garden, I was able to see that we have a lot of bees visit that part. I had not noticed this previously as we use to have the children's trampoline close to there and as it's so large the herb garden was obstructed. Since moving it, it has allowed me to see the bees come and go from there very regularly.



WHY ARE BEES IMPORTANT?

Bees are important for our world as they pollinate our trees and our plants not only for wildlife but also for our food chain.

A world in which there are no bees is a world where there would be a lot of difficulties for our environments, for our food chain and wildlife.

Bees are in severe decline, therefore working towards helping Bees is something that interests me and I want to see how I can help to encourage them more in my garden.

EXPLORING.

I noticed that a lot of the flowers that they were attracted to were of a purple variety and the majority of the plants in this area are herbs. Are bees more attracted to certain flowers over others?

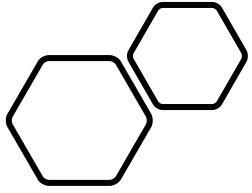


EXPLORING.

I thought that I was asking myself a bit of a silly question when asking if bees are more attracted to purple flowers, but yes..... In fact, bees are more attracted to yellow, purple and blue flowers.

So, by leaving my herbs to flower, and having other purple flowers there, it seems to have helped attract bees into our garden.





WHAT PLANTS ARE THE BEST?

- In researching with my children about bees, we discovered a variety of plants that attract bees throughout the year.
- SPRING; Crab Apple, Lungwort, Hardy Geranium.
- SUMMER; Bergamot, Borage, Cornflower, Lavender, Fox Glove.
- AUTUMN; Common Ivy, Dahlia, Hardy Fuchsia.
- WINTER; Honeysuckle, Winter Flowering Crocus.



As a result, from researching, I decided to go out and buy a lavender plant in order to plant it up in that area to add more options for the bees to be able to pollenate.



The Bee .



It was a really lovely experience to have the time to be able to sit out in the garden and spend some time listening to the bees whilst I drew this picture. It took me a few hours to do, and I did have a photo as a reference as bees are hard to draw live! But I loved looking in detail at the photo and to discover the different colours and textures a bee has and the intricate details of the bees' wings.





CONSERVING BEE BOMBS

I decided as part of conserving that I would make some homemade bee bombs with my children. I already had flour, and compost (peat free) the only thing that I needed to get was the wild flower seeds.

STEP 1.

- Make a dough like consistency mixing the compost and the flour and adding some water as you go. You want to get it to a dough like consistency.
- I started with more flour than compost and then gradually added more flour as this is the ingredient that allows the bomb to dry out hard so you can package and transport to the location you want to 'bomb'.
- We used the pan and the spoon from the children's mud kitchen to mix it all up.



STEP 2.

Take as much of the mixture as you want from the pot and then roll and form it into the ball shape.



STEP 3.

- Take your wild flower seed and spread them across a chopping board, again this was from the mud kitchen.
- Take the ball you've created, and roll it over the seeds making sure that you pick up every last seed and distribute them evening around the ball.



STEP 4.

- Put the board in a sunny spot (we were going to put them outside but were worried about the birds eating the seeds!)
- Let them dry until they're hard and then you can 'bomb' the area you want with these seeds and watch them grow.



SHARING.

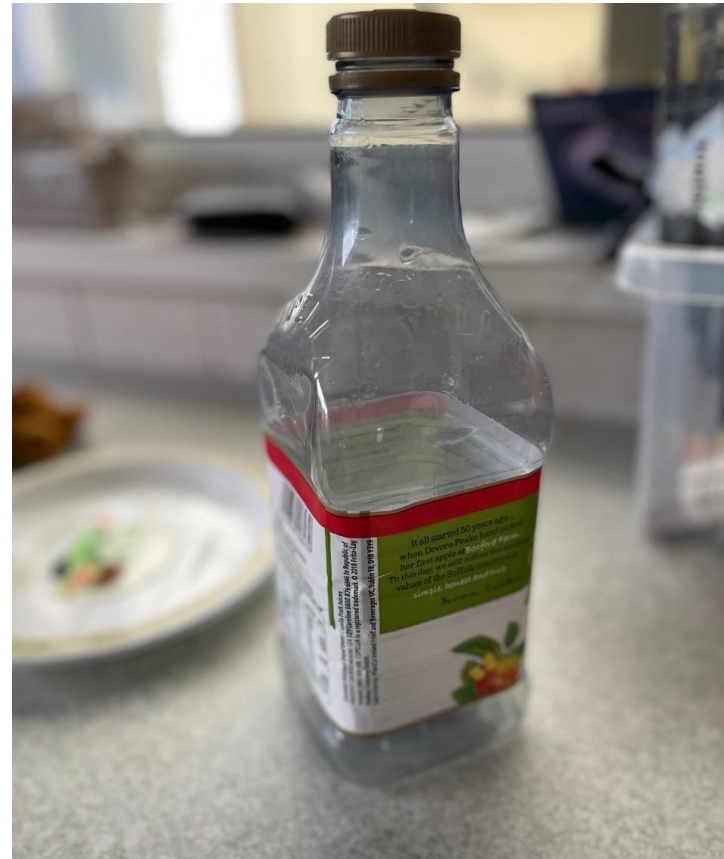
- .The children, and I, had such a lot of fun making these bombs that we are going to make some more as they want to give them as gifts to their teachers as thank you presents, with a little story about the bee and using the picture that I created on the labelling.

SHARING.

- Here are some of the flowers that have been grown with some of the bee bombs previously, so we're hoping that ours will grow the same once 'bombed'.

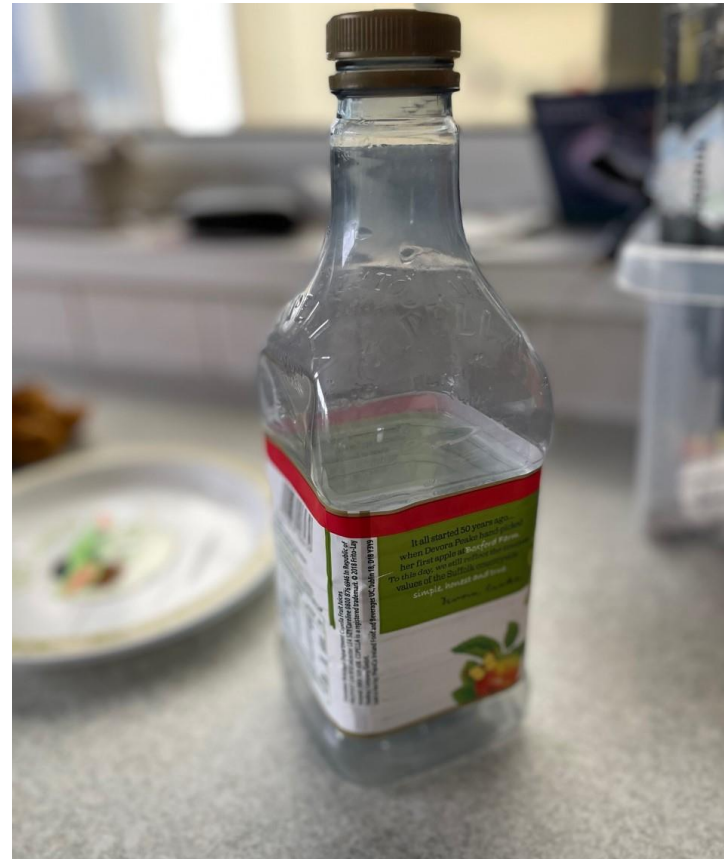


BEE HOUSE.



I looked at other ways that I could attract bees into the garden and looking at sustainability and thinking about repurposing items we already have. I hadn't realized that you were able to create a bee house/ hotel. So, I decided to make one in the hope of hanging it up in the bit of the garden that I've been discovering to attract the bees some more.

BEE HOUSE.



From research it is good to provide this space for the bees in the garden as bees don't like to live a solitary life, as in a hive they're all together. So, in essence, I am recreating a hive, to encourage the bees to come and live in the garden. Hopefully they will come and lay their eggs in there and we can study them some more.

BEE HOUSE.

- STEP 1.
- I went to visit my mother in law's polytunnel and found that she had left over dried bits of willow around the place and so I picked them up to use in the making of the bee house and these were already dry and not being used for anything.





BEE HOUSE.

- STEP 2.
- I took the willow stalks and chopped them to roughly the size of the bottle. Some of these needed to be sawn with a saw and others snapped quite easily. I decided that I would pre cut these before having the children help me.



BEE HOUSE.

- STEP 3.
 - Once all cut, we layered the willow in the bottle and stacked it up until it filled the whole thin. We realized that we didn't have quite enough to compact it and found a bit of driftwood previously collected from years ago in the garden that fit in to act as something that held it all together.





BEE HOUSE.

- STEP 4.
- The willow came with an old bit of twine from the polytunnel, and it was long enough to tie around so that we could hang it close to the herb garden.



BEE HOUSE.

- STEP 5.
- This is the finished product hanging above the herb garden out of reach of the children. What I loved about it is that it uses up things from around the house and repurposes them , but it also looks very natural and blends into the garden in a lovely way.



WHAT NEXT?

I've learnt so much from this experience being able to re-engage with the environment in my garden and discovering more about the bees in particular.

I help to run holiday camps in the summer for families and children, and intend on making the information I've collected available to families about how to create bee bombs and how to create a bee house as a way of encouraging others to do so.

I intend to watch my bee house and see if we get more bees because of it (spring time would be the time where I will see more bees using it).

