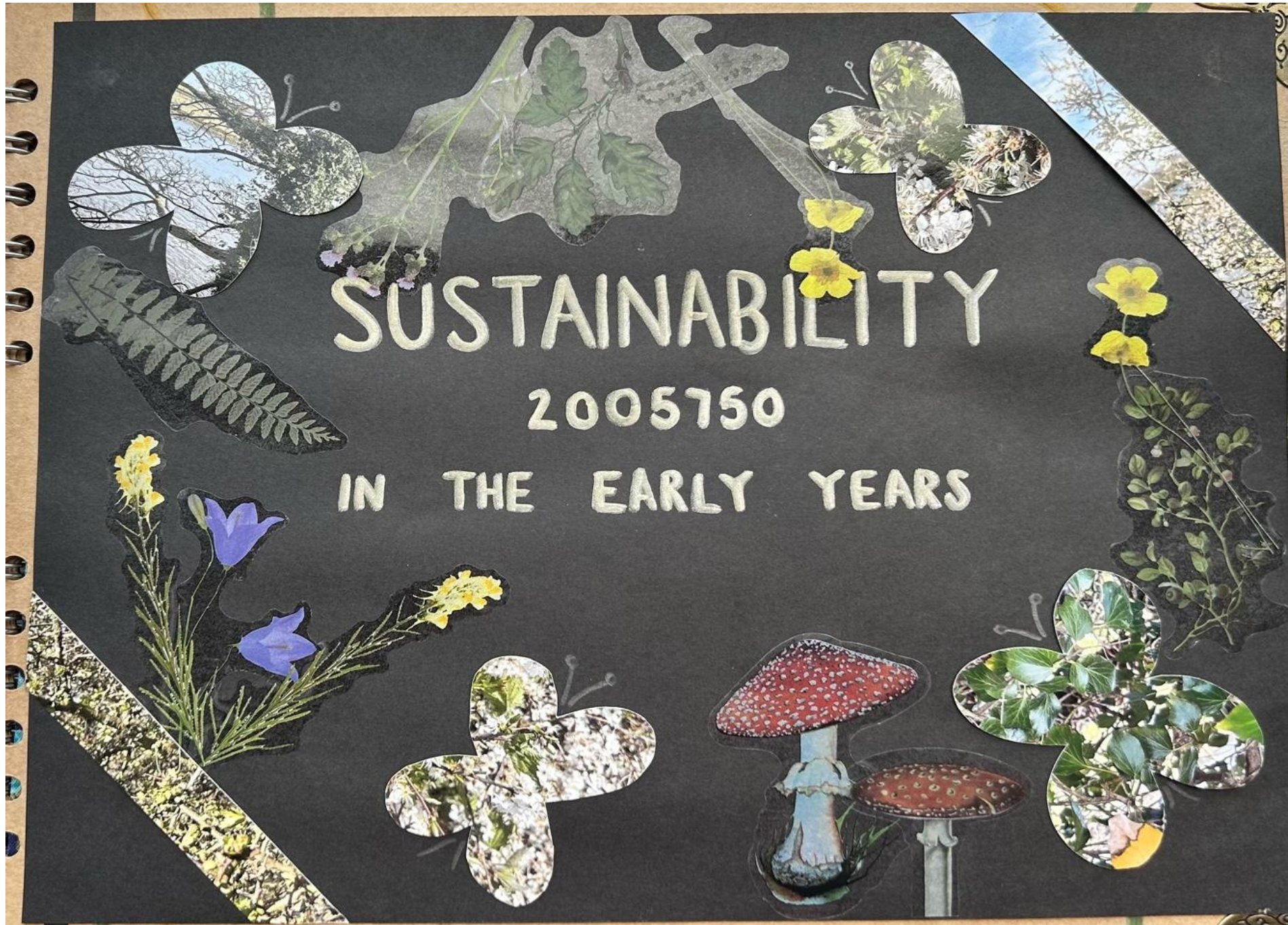


SUSTAINABILITY

2005750

IN THE EARLY YEARS



DISCOVER

When we first bought our house in early 2021, the garden was a little unkept, but very green, with thick, luscious grass and a variation of plants and shrubbery. The previous owners had even created an area for composting and additional areas that had rockery and plenty of flower borders.



This is almost the opposite of what we envisioned for our first garden, so we began to make plans to create what we pictured would be our ideal outdoor area to relax and entertain family and friends.

DISCOVER



We decided that the bottom area of the garden would be great for a big shed and a seating area to relax in. So, we took out the giant wooden sleepers that created the flower borders for lavender and rose bushes. We then removed the mountain of earth and area for composting.

We replaced this whole area with new concrete slabs and built a new concrete wall and steps to distinguish the difference between the bottom area of the garden and the top.



EXPLORE

However, when spring and summer came around in 2022, I started to notice how there were no flying insects visiting our garden. I also noticed how birds would land on our fence and fly away almost immediately. The only wildlife I could see was the odd spider or woodlouse living in the cracks of the concrete walls.



I realised that we had created a lovely and modern garden for us as humans to enjoy and relax in, but in doing so we had taken away a natural space which was meant for wildlife to explore and enjoy too.

EXPLORE



We had also unknowingly removed the learning opportunities for us, but also my young nieces and nephews. In the garden we had when we moved in there was plenty of plants, birds and mini beasts to identify and learn more about, spurring that sustained shared thinking conversation and learning experience between adults and children.

JOHN MUIR AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

So, when this sustainability module came around along with the John Muir Award, I saw my garden as the perfect case study to base my assignment on. I knew I needed to make some sustainable choices and bring back natural opportunities for insects and birds to revisit and live in my garden.

I thought the easiest way to begin bringing my garden back to a more natural state would be by planting flowers and seeds in plant pots.



CONSERVE

After some research, I first planted yellow and white Dahlia's. I discovered that many insects such as bumble bees and butterflies are especially attracted to Dahlia's as they are easily accessible for the pollen and nectar. Bees use pollen to make honey, and butterflies carry pollen on their bodies to other plants to help them produce new seeds and reproduce.



APRIL 22nd →

I found un-labelled seeds in our shed that I intended to plant last year, along with some white buckets which I decided to upcycle and use as plant pots. I drilled holes in the bottoms to allow the water to drain, filled them with soil and sprinkled the unknown seeds in. I wonder what they are and who knows if they will grow?

MAY 13th →

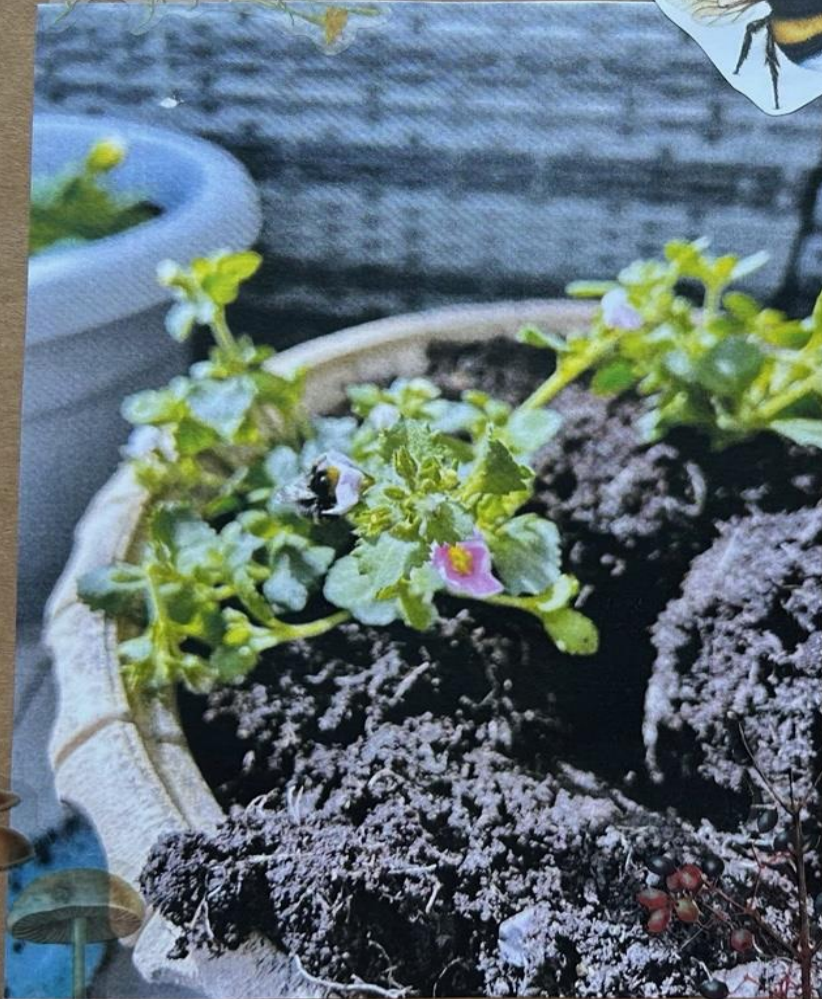


APRIL 30th ↓



Whilst planting my new flowers, I was very excited to witness the first bumble bee to come and investigate the flora I had chosen for the garden and for him and his friends to enjoy. I hope this is the beginning of having a garden full of bumble bees!





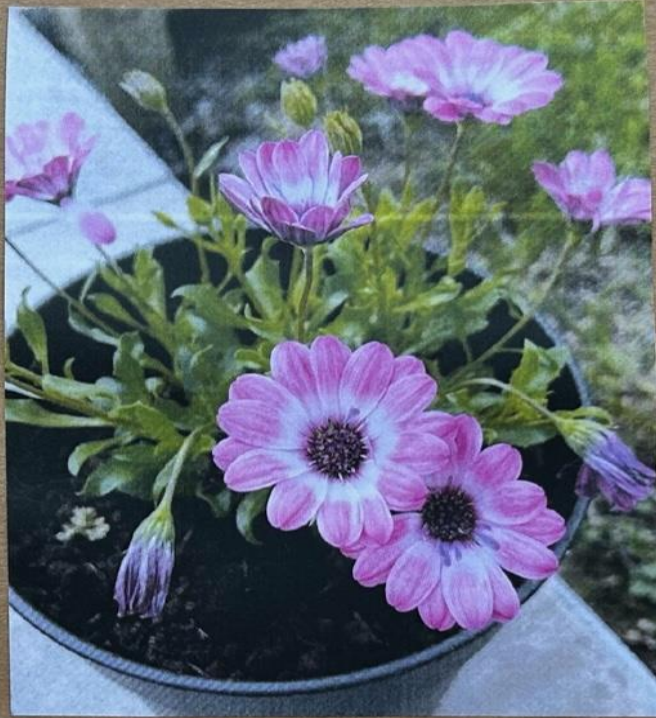
I decided to name him
Barnaby!



Barnaby the Bumble Bee,
How quickly you fly,
I didn't know you were there,
Until I looked up into the sky,
I heard you BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZ!
As I watched you come closer,
I could see your black and yellow fuzz,
Would you be here if it was colder?
You found the pretty pink flowers I planted,
How do they smell?
They're full of pollen and nectar,
I don't want to wish you farewell.
But off on your way you must go,
Carrying sweet gold with which you'll make honey,
Will you start working straight away?
Or will you wait until it is sunny?
The planet needs to look after bees like you,
We'd be in trouble you see,
Oh, how I wish the world could understand,
The magnificent importance of Barnaby the Bumble Bee.

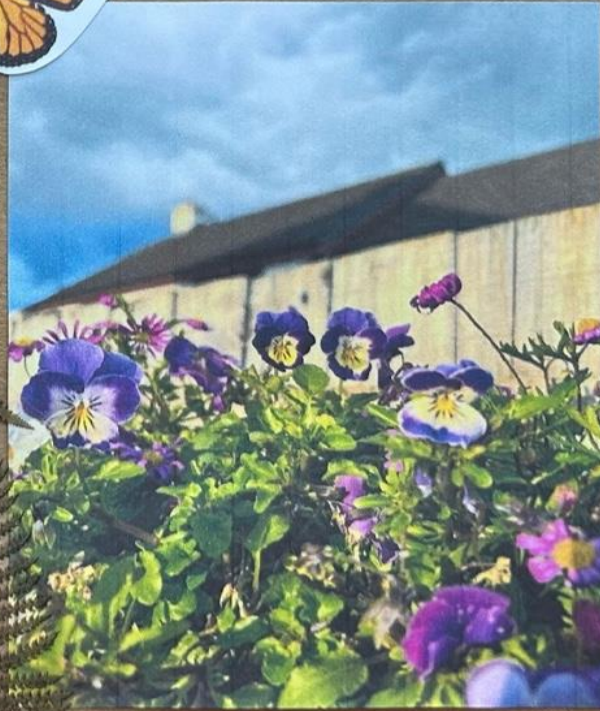
I bought some flowers of several different varieties and colours to plant into plant pots I had also bought from the garden centre.





These are my favourite flowers I have planted in my garden because they are big and bright! They are Afro-Australian Daisies - native to Australia and Africa. I was also surprised to learn they are part of the Sunflower family. The best part is that they are perennials which means they will come back every year!

Next, I happened to have a conversation with my grandad about the sustainability module and John Muir award. I shared with him that I'd like to change our garden and add more flowers and greenery as part of my assignment. He kindly gifted me a lovely pot full of purple hybrid Pansies and two pots of Violets. They came from his own garden - how lovely!





I had some left over Dahlia plants, so I decided to plant some into the grass next to the fence. Here I have decided to begin building a flower border to enhance the colour and flora variety in my garden. I plan to add some rose bushes and lavender plants too.





I thought this fence looked a little bit bare, so I planted Violets, Pansies and pink Daisies into a basket planter and hung it up. I think the fence will be a top attraction for insects, bees and butterflies once I add more baskets!

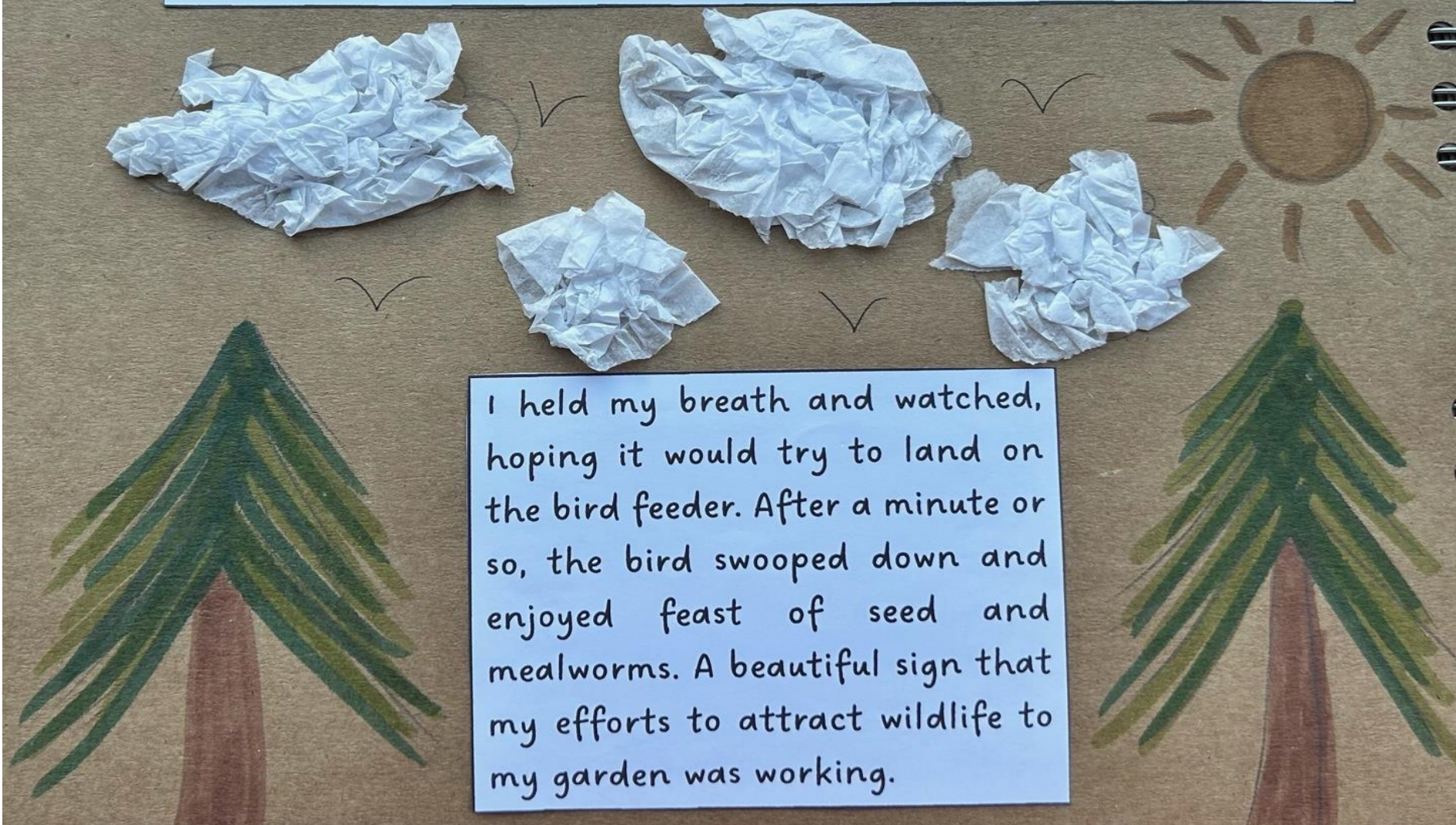


CONSERVE

I have also researched what birds like to eat at this time of year. Seeds and mealworms seem to be a popular choice of cuisine, so I went and found a bird feeder made of wood to put in the garden. I also found a beautiful bracket with a bird on it, which I have fixed to a post on our fence. Our new bird feeder hangs perfectly on it, creating our new bird feeding station.



After a week or two of no activity on my bird feeder, I suddenly heard a bird singing and chirping seemingly very close by. I slowly approached my window to see, and to my delight I saw a little house Sparrow sitting on top of the post above the bird feeder.



I held my breath and watched, hoping it would try to land on the bird feeder. After a minute or so, the bird swooped down and enjoyed feast of seed and mealworms. A beautiful sign that my efforts to attract wildlife to my garden was working.



Since seeing the little house Sparrow, I have also seen Blackbirds, Blue tits and Magpie's. I have however noticed that the Magpie's and the Blackbirds look for food in the ground and grass rather than the bird feeder.

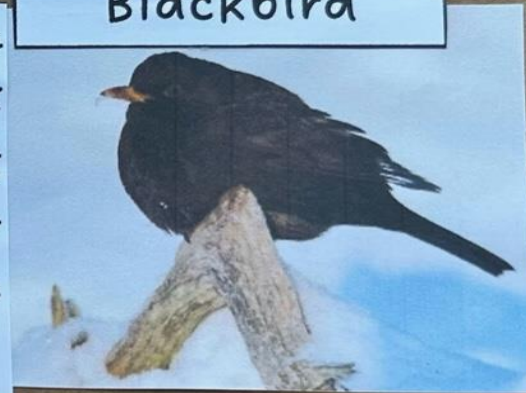


House sparrow



I learned that 16 million gardens across the UK create a larger habitat area for our birds than our national nature reserves do.

Blackbird

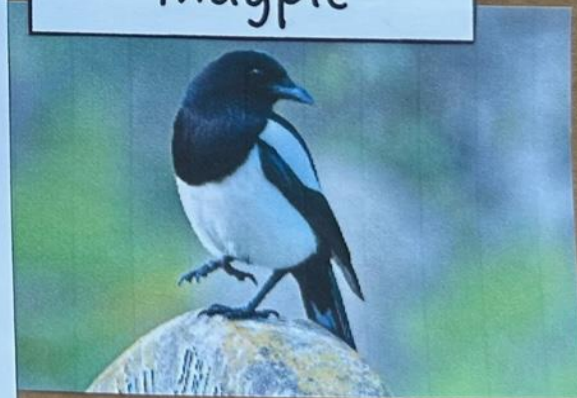


Blue tit



This shows the importance of encouraging birds to visit our outdoor spaces. Since putting up the bird feeder, I have seen 4 different types of birds in my garden.

Magpie



After observing these Blackbirds and Magpie's, I found out that these birds like to forage for their food on the ground and in hedgerows by listening and looking for movement, rather than feed from feeders.



Whilst I was tending to my garden one evening, I happened to look up. LOOK AT THAT SKY! I didn't have to water the plants myself that night. A sustainable choice instead of using water from the hose pipe.



SHARE

Once my conservation changes were well underway, I shared with my partner what I have been doing in the garden. I explained that we had accidentally and unknowingly created an unsustainable environment by concreting the bottom of the garden and having plastic plants.



I showed him the different plants I had planted, that I had removed the plastic trees and I showed him that the unknown seeds I planted were growing.



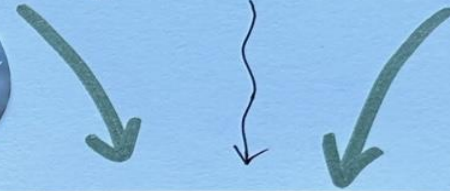
He said he wanted to help, so he filled up the bird feeder with more mealworms as I had noticed they are the first to be eaten by the birds. He also thought it would be a good idea place some seed and mealworms on top of the post to encourage birds down and see the bird feeder.



How we usually
keep our lawn



How our lawn looks
as of the 15th May.



He also said that we should take part in something called 'No Mow May'. This is a national campaign which encourages people to leave their lawns grow to increase the nectar and pollen available to pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies. It also helps flowers to seed and establish themselves ready for the summer months.

I also remembered about two small Christmas trees I bought for the festive season of 2022. I kept them, hoping I could keep them alive for Christmas 2023 instead of having to buy new ones. A sustainable choice, instead of more trees needing to be cut down for consumers.



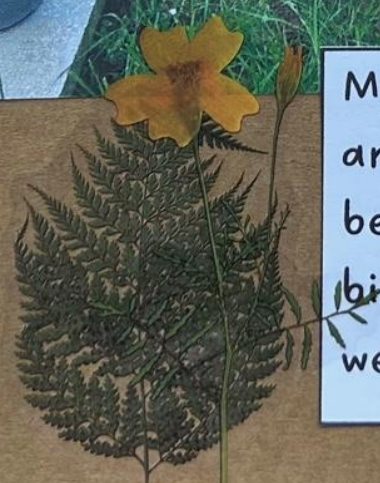
Nearly 6 months after I bought them, they are still thriving and growing new shoots as the warmer weather approaches.



I am very proud of how my garden has transformed into a better environment for minibeasts and birds of nature. There is still plenty more ideas and changes I could make to make it a more sustainable space.



My garden is really starting to burst with flowers, and I have noticed more and more wildlife beginning to visit. I can't wait to see what other birds and insects decide to explore my garden as the weather gets warmer into the summer.



The activities I have carried out in my garden would be beneficial to children's learning and development. They would learn about life cycles of flowers and insects, why bees like flowers, what they need to grow, what we can do to help look after birds and wildlife - just to name a few.



I plan to build and create a bug hotel with the spare twigs and wood we have collected in the shed to attract minibeast such as woodlouse, spiders and ants. Using this wood instead of buying or chopping new resources would be a making a sustainable choice.



Not only these learning experiences but having children doing these activities themselves will also help them feel empathy and love for our natural world, which will support their health and wellbeing through being outdoors.

