

## Pollinator Patch with Juliet from Hive Helpers

### The colour purple

As I write, the heather is in full bloom, and I hope it is still going by the time you read this. We are lucky to have so many local areas of heathland – Farnham Heath, Frensham Common, Hankley – to name but a few. There are two types of heather, both natives: bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) which seems to flower earlier and is a brighter shade of purple/pink, and common heather or ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), which is a pale lilac. Walking across heathland is one of the joys of high summer – you can hear the hum of the bees and just smell the honey! Heather honey is very distinctive, quite thick and dark, and it smells just like the heathland.

But heather is not just for honey bees, it is valuable forage for other bees including the eponymous heath bumblebee and the green-eyed flower bee. The latter is quite easy to identify, even if you can't spot the green eyes of this small bee, as it has a high pitched buzz and hovering flight which is quite distinctive. This is a mining bee, which digs burrows in sandy soil, and although solitary in that it does not live in a colony, you can often see congregations of them in a sandy area with the tell-tale piles of sand which they have dug out! I have seen both species recently on nearby Puttenham Common with our new beekeeping group, together with the lovely pantaloon bee, another mining bee, its pantaloons bright with pollen as it enters its burrow, where it lays each egg individually together with a store of pollen and nectar.



### Pollinator plant of the month – Rowan

The orange-red berries of the native rowan tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*) are particularly good this year. Rowan is a great tree for wildlife, the small white flowers in May and June provide pollen and nectar for a range of insects, including flies, bees and beetles, who in turn oblige by pollinating the flowers so they turn into the berries which are such a rich source of food for a variety of birds. There are many varieties which can be planted in gardens, some with good autumn colour.



### September plants for pollinators

Dahlias and cosmos are still flowering, along with Japanese anemones and sedums. Sedums in particular are great for pollinators, with their flat, nectar-rich flowerheads. They are also drought resistant, with fleshy leaves, and love a sunny well-drained border. Easy to divide too! Ivy should also be starting to bloom now, the main forage plant of the ivy bee, and a valuable late forage source for other pollinators.

