

Pollinator Patch with Juliet from Hive Helpers

On the naming of moths

What's in a name? The naming of species is a complicated business. First, there is the scientific name, which always has two parts, one for the genus and one for the species, and is always in Latin. This is a universal system to avoid any confusion with the common names a species may have, which can be numerous and can vary from region to region. Common names of species are fascinating, their descriptions capturing their appearance vividly, and moths are no exception. Moths are important pollinators, which are often overlooked, given that many fly at night - in fact, there are around 2,500 moths in the UK, compared to just 59 butterflies and 270 species of bee (honey bee, bumblebees and solitary bees).

We recently conducted our first ever moth trapping at Farnham Community Farm, with the help of local expert, Dr. Martin Angel. Martin set up a light trap and with the help of our volunteers and one of our youth group, an astonishing 42 species were recorded. With so many moths, picking out a few to illustrate their wonderful names is a difficult task.

There was one with a black mark on its wings thought to resemble a letter from the Hebrew alphabet, called Setaceous (bristly) Hebrew character (*Xestia c-nigrum*), the Maiden's blush (*Cyclophora punctaria*), with a distinctive central reddish blush on its forewings, and the Jersey tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*), a striking moth which you may have seen in your garden, as they fly by day and night, with striped black and cream wings and vibrant orange-red hindwings. Not to mention the Square-spot rustic (*Xestia xanthographa*) and the Six-striped rustic (*Xestia sexstrigata*), which look exactly as their names describe!



Setaceous Hebrew character (image Martin Angel)



Jersey tiger moth (image Martin Angel)



Maiden's blush (image Martin Angel)

Moths and other night-time pollinators will be attracted to plants which release stronger perfumes at night, such as the evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*), sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) and star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*). We can enjoy these too as we sit out on summer evenings – next year perhaps!

Pollinator plant of the month – Sedum

Sedums, also called stonecrop (*Hylotelephium* species) are an absolute magnet for bees in the autumn. As I write, mine is alive with various types of bumblebees, honey bees and other pollinating insects which love the flat flowerheads with their tiny pink flowers. Mine is a common garden variety which is, like all sedums, drought-tolerant, very hardy and it divides well. There are many different cultivars to suit every size of garden, and the RHS notes that 'Bertram Anderson' seems particularly attractive to bees, and 'Herbstfreude' (aka 'Autumn Joy') is 'famously attractive to butterflies fattening up for their winter hibernation' according to well-known ecologist Dave Goulson.



Ivy bee on ivy

October plants for pollinators

The ivy (*Hedera helix*) has started flowering now, and is a valuable late source of nectar for the specialist ivy bee as well as other pollinators, including many moths at night. To preserve the flowers, don't cut it back! Asters or Michaelmas daisies are good, late-flowering plants for pollinators and come in a range of heights, colours and flower sizes. Other plants still going in my garden are the red bistort (*Bistorta amplexicaulis*) and white Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*), both unstoppable, but so valuable for pollinators!