

## Pollinator Patch with Juliet from Hive Helpers

### Yellow – the colour of spring

I'm not a great fan of yellow in the garden, but nothing heralds the arrival of spring better than the burst of colour it provides, particularly after the gloomiest and greyest of winters. A carpet of lesser celandine glowing yellow in the sunshine. The palest of yellows with an egg yolk centre of our native primrose. Not forgetting Wordsworth's hosts of golden daffodils everywhere you look. Wordsworth's daffodils would have been our native wild daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) which still grows in ancient woodland or damp meadows. They can be distinguished from the garden varieties by their two-tone colour – pale yellow petals surrounding a darker yellow trumpet, narrow grey-green leaves and relatively short. One of the prettiest daffodils, I prefer them to their more brassy cousins.

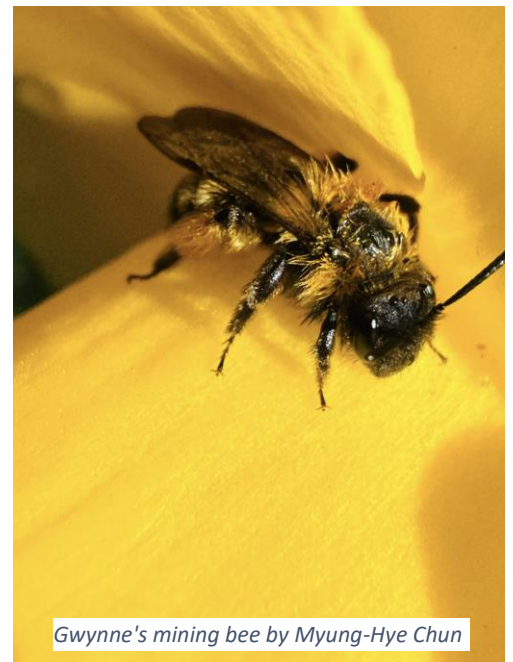
The genus name, *Narcissus*, comes from Greek mythology. Narcissus, a young man known for his beauty, was tricked into falling in love with his own reflection. The drooping flowers of the daffodil are said to represent Narcissus bending over to catch his reflection in a pool of water!

### Pollinator plant of the month – Dandelion

Another yellow plant but one many of you may class as a weed is the humble dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Weed it may be, but it is one of the most valuable plants for pollinators, not only because it is such an early source of pollen and nectar, but also because of the high sugar concentration in its nectar, which means pollinators don't need to waste energy visiting so many flowers! Even the RHS has embraced the humble dandelion, including it in their Plants for Pollinators list, and suggesting that its deep roots are good for soil health, drawing up nutrients to the surface. So learn to love them for the benefits they bring to all our pollinators!

### Wild bee of the month – Gwynne's mining bee

Gwynne's mining bee or bicoloured miner (*Andrena bicolor*) is one of around 65 species of the *Andrena* (mining bee) genus, the largest bee genus in Britain. It is a solitary bee, and like all mining bees, it nests in the soil – you can easily tell where it's been as you will see a hole and a volcano shape of soil around it. If you look closely, you may see a bee entering or leaving the nest. Females lay their eggs and provision them with nectar and pollen and the young will emerge the following year. They like light, sandy soil, and may use bare patches in your lawn – they are not active for long and don't do any real damage. They are alive and well in Wrecclesham, found on a recent bee walk with the Wrecclesham Conservation Group!



Gwynne's mining bee by Myung-Hye Chun

### Other April plants for pollinators

The blackthorn and wild plum have been flowering for a few weeks, and these will be followed in April by ornamental and fruiting cherries and apple trees, and all will be visited by our pollinators. Look out for the gingery red mason bee, featured in last month's column – a great orchard pollinator. If sowing annuals is your thing, cosmos, calendula and phacelia are all good for pollinators. Many annuals, such as forget-me-knot, ox-eye daisy and borage, will self-seed with abandon, saving you the trouble!