

What's new in the garden this month?

Brimstone moth



The Brimstone moth, characterized by its vibrant yellow hue and distinctive brown-and-white spotted angular forewings, is a common sight in various habitats such as gardens, woods, scrublands, and grasslands.

Its bright yellow coloration, accentuated by white spots bordered with brown and two orangey-brown markings along the forewing edges, lends it a striking appearance with angular wings.

This species is widely distributed across England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the Channel Islands. The caterpillars of the brimstone moth resemble twigs and feed on a range of shrubs belonging to the rose family, including hawthorn, blackthorn, and rowan.

These trees and shrubs can be found in our meadow and along pathways like the Backtrack. They serve as crucial feeding grounds for the caterpillars, contributing to the moth's lifecycle and population distribution.

Chickpeas



In the Kitchen Garden, you will find *Cicer arietinum*, commonly known as chickpeas. These plants are not only rich in protein but also possess the remarkable ability to fix nitrogen from the air.

During their growing season, which typically spans around four months, chickpeas can fix up to 140kg of nitrogen per hectare. Nitrogen fixation involves extracting nitrogen from the atmosphere and incorporating it into other molecules, crucial for enhancing protein synthesis and promoting growth in living organisms.

Nitrogen-fixing bacteria play a pivotal role in this process by providing plants with this essential nutrient, which they cannot acquire directly from the air. This natural mechanism contributes to the overall fertility of the soil in our No Dig Kitchen Garden, eliminating the need for artificial fertilizers. Consequently, this approach reduces the reliance on purchasing and transporting fertilizers, aligning with our commitment to positive climate action.

Greenwood pecker



The Green Woodpecker, Britain's largest among three breeding woodpeckers, boasts a heavy body, short tail, and robust, lengthy bill. Adorned in green upperparts with a paler belly, bright yellow rump, and red crown, males sport a black 'moustache' with a red centre. They display a distinctive bouncing flight and emit a loud, laughing call.

Feeding primarily on ants, they utilize their formidable beaks to excavate ant colonies and consume their inhabitants. Easily spotted in the trees leading to our meadow at Whatley, these woodpeckers contribute positively to our garden's ecosystem without typically causing harm to healthy trees. Their vocalization, known as a 'yaffle', serves as a recognizable indicator of their presence, alongside their accelerating 'klü' sounds.

Fritillaria Meleagris



As of January 2022, the *Fritillaria meleagris* (Snake's Head Fritillary) is considered threatened in the UK, primarily due to habitat loss and changes in land use. Historically, these delicate flowers were more widespread in damp meadows and grasslands, but agricultural intensification, drainage, and habitat destruction have significantly reduced their habitat.

Conservation efforts, including habitat restoration and management, are ongoing to help protect remaining populations of Snake's Head Fritillary in the UK. Organizations such as Plantlife and various conservation groups work to safeguard these iconic wildflowers and their habitats. Monitoring of populations and conservation initiatives aim to stabilize and hopefully increase their numbers in the wild. However, the specific status of the Snake's Head Fritillary populations may vary depending on regional and local factors.

Here at Whatley, we have endeavoured to maintain the species by planting over 3000 bulbs along the river Avon, which runs through the property.