

TREES, SHRUBS AND FLOWERING PLANTS FOR SPECIFIC HABITATS

VERTICAL HABITATS

Vertical habitats are an important, but neglected, aspect of gardening for wildlife. A vertical habitat can be a masonry or brick wall, either as part of a building or as a boundary of a garden; a fence; or the side of a timber structure.

These habitats can be very varied in aspect from providing shady, damp sites to those which are dry and sunny; micro-habitats will be common. These differing niches provide food and shelter for many species with very different climatic requirements. Cracks in sunny walls provide shelter for invertebrates and common lizards; the reflective surfaces of brick and stone provide basking places for butterflies; old masonry and render provide excellent opportunities for harvestmen, mason wasps and solitary bees; whilst larger crevices provide homes for woodmice and nesting sites for tits, house sparrows, spotted flycatchers and redstarts; climbing shrubs provide nesting sites for robins and a good habitat for spiders; and flowering shrubs supply nectar for hoverflies, bees, moths and butterflies.

The following species lists are mixed native and non-native in order to give the best coverage of shelter and food all year round.

North and northeast facing brick or masonry wall: Despite the hostile aspect, it is possible to select shrubs and climbers which will provide sources of nectar, food and shelter for insects, birds and small mammals all year round. None of the following require physical support and all are easily maintained.

Once mature, nest boxes can be sited within shrubs. The value of the habitat provided by climbing shrubs can be increased by training the plant up a trellis fixed some 12cm away from the vertical surface.

Climbing honeysuckle: *Periclymenum "belgica"*; flowers in June

Periclymenum "serotina"; flowers July to October

Climbing hydrangea: *Hydrangea petiolaris*; flowers in July; covers an area 12 x 2.4 metres; an important species for providing shelter and nesting sites for birds.

Cotoneaster: *Cotoneaster horizontalis*; flowers in May; the flowers are an important nectar source for bees; the berries are beloved by the thrush family including redwings and fieldfares.

Dog Rose: *Rosa canina*; flowers June/July; hips ripen in December; winter food for the thrush family.

Escallonia: *Escallonia macrantha/rubra*; flowers June to September

Firethorn: *Pyracantha atalantoides*; flowers in May; berries in Autumn; an important source of nectar for bees; and a food source for thrushes and finches including bullfinches. Sharp thorns.

Guelder rose: *Viburnum tinus*; flowers December to April; berries in Autumn.

Holly: *Ilex aquifolium v. "pyramidalis"*; evergreen, self-fertile; flowers in spring; berries in Autumn; food plant for the Holly Blue butterfly; dense shelter for birds.

Ivy: *Hedera helix*; dense cover; superb food plant; evergreen; flowers in late Autumn; berries in spring; one of the most important habitat and food plants for insects.

Mahonia: *Mahonia media* v. "Charity"; flowers November to March; evergreen; important source of nectar for early flying bumblebees. Ht: 3 metres.

Ornamental currant: *Ribes odoratum*; flowers in April; source of nectar and pollen.

Shrub honeysuckle: *Lonicera fragrantissima*; flowers November to February; important source of nectar for early flying bumblebees. Ht 2.5metres.

Spiraea: *Spiraea augusta* v. "Bridal wreath"; flowers April / May. Ht 2 metres.

Spindle: *Euonymus europaeus*; source of nectar in spring; pink berries in Autumn which are poisonous to people.

St.John's Wort: *Hypericum* v. "Hidcote"; flowers June to September.

Viburnum: *Viburnum tinus*; flowers December to April; evergreen. Ht: 2 metres.

Shaded north or northeast facing wall: There are very few shrubs and climbers that will flourish in this hostile environment. All are evergreen.

Holly: *Ilex aquifolia*; shrub

Yew: *Taxus baccata*; shrub

Ivy: *Hedera helix*; climber

Sunny south and west facing walls: All the species listed for the open, north and east facing walls can be used with the following in addition:

Buddleia: *Buddleia davidii* and *Buddleia globosa*; great for butterflies, bees and moths, including the Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

Callicarpa: *Callicarpa bodinieri giraldi* v. "Profusion"; purple berries in Autumn, beloved of the thrush family.

Caryopteris: *Caryopteris clandonensis*; flowers August/September; great for bees.

Californian lilac: *Ceanothus* varieties; many different varieties, but choose an evergreen, spring flowering variety.

Hardy plumbago: *Ceratostigma willmottianum*; Autumn flowering; very attractive to Hummingbird Hawkmoths.

Broom: *Cytisus praecox*

Daphne: *Daphne odoratum* and *Daphne mezereum*; flowers in February/March; very attractive to bumblebees.

Fuchsia: *Fuschia magellanica*; good food plant for Elephants' Head Hawkmoth caterpillars.

Lilac: *Syringa vulgaris*

Mock Orange: *Philadelphus coronarus*; choose a variety in the medium height group (upto 2.5 metres); good for bees.

Shrubby veronica: *Hebe* varieties: "Autumn Glory" and "Great Orme"; these flower in autumn to early winter; good for late flying butterflies and bees.

Flowers and ferns for dry, sunny, masonry walls with crevices: All the species listed below are attractive to a wide range of insects:

Flowers:

Aubretia: *Aubretia deltoids*

Biting stonecrop: *Sedum acre*

Climbing nasturtium: *Tropaeolum majus*

Ivy leaved toadflax: *Cymbalaria muralis*

Mexican fleabane or Wall Daisy: *Erigeron karvinskianus*

Narrow leaved everlasting pea: *Lathyrus sylvestris*

Navelwort: *Umbilicus rupestris*

Pink: *Dianthus* varieties
Red valerian: *Valeriana ruber*
Rock rose: *Helianthemum nummularium*
Stonecrop: *Sedum album*
Thrift: *Armeria maritime*
Wallflower: *Cheiranthus cheir* / *Erysimum cheiri*
Wall pennywort: *Cotyledon umbilicus-veneris*
Wall pepper: *Sedum acre*
Wild strawberry: *Fragaria vesca*
Yellow corydalis: *Pseudofumaria lutea*

Ferns:

Common polypody: *Polypodium vulgare*
Maidenhair spleenwort: *Asplenuim trichmares*
Wall-rue: *Asplenium ruta-muraria*

Resources:

All the shrubs listed can be found at local Garden Centres. However, the flowering plants and ferns may be more difficult to obtain.

1. For suppliers of native flowering plants and ferns, use Floralocale: www.floralocale.org
2. For both native and non-native species, use the Royal Horticultural Society's Plant Finder. The current Plant Finder will be on their web-site: www.rhs.org.uk