

OPINION

Climate Action

Harborough Climate Action

Weeds – our new garden heroes

If hero plants, one of the new names for weeds, plus insects, birds and hedgehogs could speak, how many marks out of 10 would they give us for the way we care for their homes – our gardens?

For one couple, Mary and Bill (not their real names) it would be a resounding 10 out of 10.

Growing up, Mary lived in the country. Her family grew a lot of their food, particularly herbs. They lived near a farm and people in the village helped with lambing, haymaking and picking crops. One farm grew blackcurrants for Ribena that people used to help pick and be paid for.

When Mary and Bill retired, they lived on a narrow boat in

France, exploring life on the water. A major stroke for Bill brought these travels to an end and with their cat, a return to a house and a medium sized garden in the UK.

With the serious and worrying decline in insect life, a wild garden or corner, is something everyone with a garden, can provide and it would be amazing if lots of us allowed this in our gardens, however small and however much it goes against the grain!

Mary has not just had a corner. Her whole garden is a managed wild one and she loves it. She has different zones for each group of insects and mini beasts. The ditch by the back of the house is the hedgehog highway, and Mary and Bill hear the creatures snuffling



along on their foraging journeys. Thankfully their neighbours have tunnel shaped holes in their fences for the hedgehogs to travel through, to eat a good meal. Any hoglets found in October, are taken to the wonderful Wildlife Hospital in Kibworth to survive winter.

A zone near the house contains herbs for cooking and just for the pleasure of them too, such as sage, thyme, bay leaf

How many marks out of 10 would a hedgehog give you for the way you look after your garden?

and rosemary, lovage, oregano, lemon balm, borage – the flowers look pretty in a salad and are edible – salad burnet, dandelions, nettles. Wild strawberries just appeared and are shared with the birds particularly blackbirds.

Liquid from the wormery feeds the plants in pots – in pots to protect them from would be footballers and rugby players. Family visitors are still capable of random balls landing on a plant. They have thistles for their lovely flowers which a whole variety of bees like, as well as moths and butterflies too. The brambles are kept in another area for the blackbirds especially.

There is a small, shaded pond in a container, with lots of stones for the frogs, who like

cover, and which keeps them cool. They feed on the insects that come to the water in the evening. The garden has never had a problem with greenfly because ants and ladybirds enjoy them. The second larger pond is for caddis flies and reeds, forming a sort of mini wetland.

There are mini beasts such as mice, bats flying overhead and feeding on insects at dusk and during the night, and many varieties of birds.

In the autumn, Mary will plant yellow rattle because they wrap around the grass roots and inhibit growth and thin the grass. The aim is to have a grass area and a meadow for grasshoppers in particular.

Mary and Bill get their enjoyment from watching all this activity.