

**Contents:**

**This Newsletter gives more information about the “No Mow May” Campaign, updates information about recycling blister packs, has the date for our next Pet Service, and invites you to help with a nature survey in the churchyard.**

**It also tells you about our Green Fair in June, gives some of the results of the Great British Plastic Count in March and has a biblical perspective on soil.**

**No Mow May:** *Peter Lewis writes:* Many of us around Knowle will be living in houses built on farmland not too long ago – and you will be surprised how long the seeds of wild plants can wait underground for a chance to reappear. Locking up the lawn mower for May can be a way of giving those plants a chance. Many wildflowers will bloom and produce seeds within 4-5 weeks and you will discover that you are the custodian of important plants for pollinators and insects – plants which have been dormant for several decades because of constant mowing. A recent study of 600 gardens over six years showed that butterflies greatly benefited from the “No Mow May” approach. Gardens on the edge of villages, near fields and farms, showed a 93% increase in butterfly numbers – is that you? Even very urban gardens showed 18% increase. The range of species who benefited included meadow browns, gatekeepers, speckled woods and small skippers. Longer grass itself was beneficial but flower species such as knapweed helped butterfly populations too. Given the general decline in UK butterflies this approach offers a great deal of hope.

No Mow May is a national campaign supported by local councils and many churches. You will have seen the positive effects of Solihull not mowing verges and central reservations, allowing a variety of colourful wild plants to appear. Not mowing churchyards (or parts of churchyards) has proved very effective at releasing some more unusual and ancient plants, since churchyards have rarely been fertilised by farmers or treated with pesticides. We will be experimenting to see what ancient wildflowers might be lurking in parts of Knowle Parish Churchyard. In my previous parish we discovered wild orchids and several flowers you might have expected in ancient cornfields.

“Cutting less and later is better for nature” says Archie Thomas of the charity Plantlife. You don’t need to leave your whole lawn unmown – just start off with leaving a wild corner or the patch that’s most out of sight. The results might be either that you produce more common pollinator friendly plants such as buttercups, daisies and clover, or that you find some more unusual and important plants such as Bird’s Foot Trefoil, Oxeye Daisy or Yellow Rattle – for which the bees will be very grateful. If you spot things growing at the end of the month you might then choose to leave a smaller patch unmown during early June whilst you watch the flowers seed themselves. Give it a try and let us know how you get on.



**Recycling Blister Packs from Used Medication:** It seems there has been a misunderstanding. Several of us have taken used blister packs to either Boots or Tesco Pharmacies in the belief they would be recycled. It has now been clarified that neither company can recycle empty packs, but both were willing to take half-used packs to “safely dispose of the medication”. If empty packs were given in they were

simply put in the mixed waste bin! This is because blister packs are mixed materials and cannot currently be recycled very easily. As they contain both plastic and metal foil, they are

likely to remain in waste tips for many centuries and so far, the pharmaceutical manufacturers have not made it a priority to either find a way of recycling them or to produce an alternative way of storing and distributing medication. We are sorry if you were misled. Staff at Boots and Tesco thought they were being helpful by taking empty ones in, but they could only put them in the bin. So, more work needs to be done on this!

**Advance notice for all pet owners:** Knowle Parish Church will again be holding a Pet Service to celebrate our connection with animals and the joy that our pets bring us. The service will be at 3 pm on Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> of June outside church depending on the weather and Emily will be sharing more details of these plans shortly. Get your pets ready and excited about it – well maybe not too excited!



**Count on Nature:** Knowle Parish Church will be joining churches all over the country in holding a survey of wildlife in the churchyard during June. The importance of churchyards, especially ancient ones like ours, cannot be overstated in terms of providing a haven for nature and a home for important traditional plants. You don't need to be an expert to help with this – you will not have to distinguish between a cheetah and a tiger! There will be some reference sheets to help you spot plants, flowers and insects and some help working out which birds you can hear singing. Do come along and see what we can find. The survey will be conducted at 10 a.m. on Saturday 8 June and will be led by Hannah Bull. Just turn up and see how you can help.



**Green Fair:** On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 7-9pm we will be holding a Green Fair in St. John's Hall with lots of information and advice about how you can help with protecting the environment, reducing carbon emissions, and helping nature to recover. This is part of the national Great Big Green Week when events like this will be happening all over the country. Do come along with your questions, your suggestions and your curiosity!

**Results of the Great Big Plastic Count:** In March many of us counted our plastic waste as part of the national survey and now the overall findings have been released. The evidence shows that we are nowhere near the goal set by UK supermarkets to make all packaging recyclable by 2025! Indeed, the UK is now second only to the USA as the most plastically polluting country in the world. Households in the UK are throwing away 90 billion pieces a year. Taking into account the types of plastics that households reported on, it seems that currently only 17% of this is being recycled, whilst most is incinerated and 14% is exported! The UN is working towards a Global Plastics Treaty later this year and this needs to be an issue we all raise with our politicians. Meanwhile we can each keep up our efforts to hunt for shops and markets that sell loose fruit and veg, looking out for paper wrapping rather than plastic packaging, and taking every opportunity to ensure our own household plastic is put in the recycling bin and not general waste.

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**A Biblical Perspective on Soil:** When working in your garden or allotment, or walking through Knowle Park avoiding the mud, have you ever thought about the soil from a biblical perspective? Farmers know that soil and its qualities are their most precious asset, and a recent study of the biblical references to soil & the importance of stewardship of the land shows that these are deeply embedded in scripture.

Dr Hilary Marlow has published a study of Old and New Testaments and this underlines that the soil, which we need to grow things, is indeed a gift from God entrusted into our care. It is clear in the Bible that the land “praises God” and gives us clues as to God’s nature. Soil is not just a disposable thing to be used for our own benefit, but it is a sign of God’s infinite wisdom and care – a barometer of our own stewardship of the planet God has entrusted to us. It is literally “our home” and therefore not to be “trashed” or misused. Take another look at it and marvel!