



GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

September, a tapestry of gold and green,
Where summer's warmth begins to wane.
With each passing day, the air grows crisp,
As September's touch leaves hearts adrift -
Vinaya Joseph

Health - Naturally

In 2008, the United States Department of Health and Wellness officially designated September as National Yoga Month. A great opportunity to raise awareness and educate people about the health benefits associated with yoga in the UK as well. There are many different types of yoga. While challenging yourself by pushing the boundaries of your body's strength and flexibility (while also controlling your breath) will feel amazing at the time, there's some evidence that regular yoga practice helps people with high blood pressure, heart disease, aches and pains (including lower back pain), depression and stress.



Learn more - Car Free Day

22 September is World Car Free Day, when all around the world, towns and cities allow people to experience streets free of motor traffic as well as making travel easier for those who rely on private vehicles for health and mobility reasons. For schools the Living Streets challenge for this year will see pupils discover The Magic of Walking, where they'll meet various magical beings along the way and learn about the important reasons to walk or wheel and its benefits for individuals, communities and the planet!

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/world-car-free-day/>



City of Nature Programme update

Civic engagement - the power of people!

David Attenborough said: “No one will protect what they don’t care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced” Through all the conversations during the three years of Future Parks Accelerator project it became obvious that people needed parks and parks needed people and it wasn’t going to be just about how to preserve what we have; it was going to be how do we improve what we have, retro fit parks and increase the amount of green space people have access to, create more parks.

We knew we needed to:

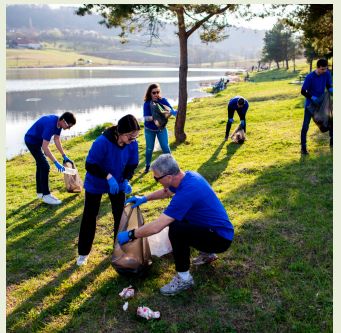
- Promote the benefits the natural world provides us.
- Devise opportunities for everyone to access these benefits.

And we know we need to support the people who want to do this and inspire those that had not had the chance to experience this yet.

Our first Alliance workshop was about investigating how those opportunities would be funded over the next 25 years. Our second workshop was about amplifying all types of civic engagement:

- Civic Action - Campaigning
- Civic Commitment - including volunteering
- Civic Skills - Green Champions
- Civic Cohesion - Friends Groups

We will share a webpage address for all the resources from this workshop next month. There will also be a final feedback event in October 2024.



Please contact us at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk if you would like to find out more about the City of Nature Programme, Green Champions, Young Green Champions, the City of Nature Alliance or the Ranger Service Wild Heart - Healthy Parks Programme.

Come and Connect with City of Nature Team



Please come and join us online on Thursday 26th September 2024 1pm - 2pm for a catch up on what has been happening in September.

If you receive this Newsletter by email you will already have been sent the link to join, please don't forget to put a note in your diary :)

If not you can get the link by emailing us on Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk and we will email you the link.



Nature's Calendar - September: A fruity month

September sees our natural spaces full of plants producing their amazing array of fruits that follow on from the spring and summer display of flowers. Most fruits have seeds, which make them capable of developing into new plants. It might be strange to think of this but fruit is a matured and ripened ovary of a plant, which contains seeds for plant reproduction.

Take a look in hedgerows in September where there can be an abundance of fruits which are a lifeline for many of our birds as their summer food supplies, such as caterpillars and insects, run low. Look out for Blackbirds and other thrushes, as well as warblers such as Whitethroats and Blackcaps all stocking up. Blackberry, Elderberry, Hawthorn haws, rosehips, Rowan berries and Blackthorn sloes are all coming into season now. But also plants we may not think of such as ivy and honeysuckle also have ripe fruits at this time of year. But it's not just birds which are making the most of the berry bonanza. In fact, many of our mammals, such as Hedgehogs, squirrels and Foxes all eat berries when available. **It's always important to say not all fruits are safe for humans to eat so please don't forage without good knowledge and permission.**

Ferns and lycophytes are non-woody plants and don't produce seeds, flowers or fruit. Instead, ferns and lycophytes reproduce using tiny structures called spores. For fungi when conditions are just right, which may happen in September, the fine threads that make up the fungi mycelium that lies hidden from view under the ground can form the fruit body of the fungus that we see. The red and white fairy-tale like Fly Agaric fungi can often be seen at this time of year.



<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/natures-calendar/natures-calendar-september>



Grassland meadows - sowing the seeds for spring

Birmingham City Council is continuing it's A to Bee roads pilot:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/2923/a_to_bee_roads

A rolling management programme for meadow areas is cost effective, minimises operational impacts, improves safety and maximises the Natural Capital Value of the assets in keeping with highway authority statutory duties. Conversely, where this proactive cycle does not occur, long-term management costs tend to increase, business performance is reduced while risks increase and the Natural Capital and biodiversity value of the road verge is diminished and they can eventually develop into bramble thickets and scrub.

However timing is everything, It is vital that wild flowers are able to complete their full lifecycle – i.e. grow, flower and set seed. This replenishes the seed bank and allows populations to be maintained cost-free and indefinitely. Cutting too early and too frequently swiftly eliminates many species, reducing diversity and the value of the road verge. Cutting after flowers have set seed in late summer allows visually striking displays of wild flowers and a rich source of pollen and nectar for pollinators. Wild flowers take roughly six to eight weeks from flowering to setting seed. September will see the start of the mowing of these areas.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Managing%20grassland%20road%20verges.pdf>



Birmingham's Countryside - Seven Country Parks

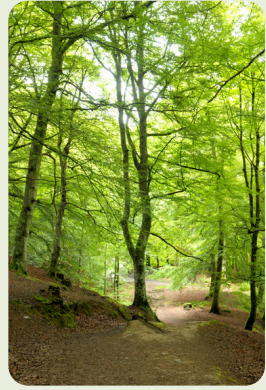
We have over the last few months looked at The Shire Country Park and Kingfisher Country Park (LNR) in East Birmingham which follow the course of the River Cole. But Birmingham also has another five Country Parks; Newhall Valley Country Park, Sheldon Country Park and Farm, Woodgate Valley Country Park and Farm (LNR), Lickey Hills Country Park and Sutton Park National Nature Reserve (NNR) which is also a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).

Birmingham City Council also has a number of Local Nature Reserves:

- [Balaam's Wood Local Nature Reserve](#)
- [Bromwich Wood Local Nature Reserve](#)
- [Edgbaston Reservoir](#)
- [Hill Hook Nature Reserve](#) (Managed by the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust)
- [Kings Norton Park](#)
- [Moseley Bog](#) (Managed by the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust)
- [Plantsbrook Nature Reserve](#)
- [Quinton Meadows](#)
- [Rubery Cuttings Local Nature Reserve](#)

Birmingham City Council also has 71 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust also has Deer's Leap Wood which is a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/deers-leap-wood>



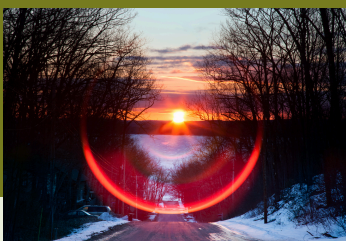
September - Folklore and Traditions:

September's name comes from the Latin word *septem*, meaning "seven," as this month had originally been the seventh month of the early Roman calendar.

The first day of autumn all depends on what calendar you follow. According to the meteorological calendar, the first day of autumn is Sunday 1st September. However, the astronomical calendar is based on the position of the Sun in relation to the Earth and changes each year — known as the autumn equinox. This year, it falls on Sunday 22nd September 2024. "On the autumn equinox, day and night are of roughly equal length and the nights will become increasingly longer than the days," explains the Met Office.

Harvest Moon is the name given to the full Moon closest in date to the first day of autumn, known as the autumn equinox. The last Harvest Moon occurred on 29 September 2023 and the next will occur on 18 September 2024, rising at 19:28 BST (18:28 UTC). The 2024 Harvest Moon will also be a super moon, and the second of 4 super moons in a row at the end of 2024.

Michaelmas, or the Feast of Michael and All Angels, is celebrated on the 29th of September every year. As it falls near the equinox, the day is associated with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days; in England, it is one of the "quarter days". It used to be said that harvest had to be completed by Michaelmas, almost like the marking of the end of the productive season and the beginning of the new cycle of farming.



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Plantsbrook Nature Reserve

Eachelhurst Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B76 1DZ

With woodlands, wetlands and wildflower meadows, Plantsbrook Local Nature Reserve is a haven for wildlife and notable for its expanses of open water.

Lying on the Plantsbrook Wildlife Corridor and extending over more than 26 acres, it was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1991. An original large pool on the site, once serving a forge, was converted to reservoirs for a public drinking supply in Victorian times but they eventually returned to nature.

In 1978 the pools were drained for landfill, but a local campaign resulted in the purchase of the site by Birmingham City Council leading to the opening of a nature reserve in 1985.

Toilets

There are no toilets on site.

Points of interest

- Four pools

Other features

- Mainly well-surfaced paths and boardwalks
- Shaded walks around the four pools
- Plentiful aquatic life including waterfowl and herons

Park friends group

[The Friends of Plantsbrook Local Nature Reserve](#)

For further information, or to get involved, visit the group's [Facebook page](#).

[Plantsbrook Nature Reserve | Birmingham City Council](#)



How does your garden grow?

September is generally a cooler, windier month than August and the days are noticeably shorter.

While there's not as much to do in the ornamental garden at this time of the year, if you have a fruit or vegetable patch, you'll be busy reaping the rewards of harvest. It's also time to get out and start planting spring-flowering bulbs for next year and you can collect seeds for next summer's colour too. Make the most of the remaining warmth while you can! Find out more jobs for the September garden from the RHS:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/september>



Where did summer go and what to do in Autumn

"Where did the summer go?" is often included in conversations at this time of year. The summer holidays are over it's back to school and it all seemed to happen too fast. But we can make it feel like more time has passed. Modern research supports the 1885 advice of philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau who advised to lengthen time, "Fill it, if you have the chance, with a thousand new things". When you do lots of different things, time passes quickly. But we perceive time in two different ways: we judge how fast it's going right now and we also look back, asking ourselves how long it felt. We partly make that judgement by considering how many new memories we made, so the more different things you pack into one weekend, the longer that weekend will feel when it comes to Monday morning. A weekend spent at home watching telly or reading may feel relaxing at the time, but gives rise to so few new memories that the weekend will not stand out from any other, making time appear to have gone faster. We also need to spend time actively making new memories, be in the moment and pay attention, notice what is happening this is also called mindfulness, stretch out every minute by using all your senses. Give it a go and see if it makes a difference this weekend.



fallen leaves



Autumn Art

During the summer lots of great events took place with fun days, fetes and picnics happening in parks across Birmingham. Communities came together to provide food and activities and in many cases also feature nature as part of the community with birds, butterflies, bees, trees and flowers all offering a focus for improving wellbeing. The City of Nature Alliance of organisations <https://naturallybirmingham.org/birmingham-city-of-nature-alliance/> came together with Birmingham City Council and community groups to provide a whole host of opportunities for people to connect with nature in our green, blue and even grey spaces. Activities included bird walks, bee trails, planting, arts and crafts, storytelling, mindfulness, meeting trees, bench chats, making music, sharing food and simply noticing nature. Next month will feature a full story of everything that went on.

But what about what to do in autumn - well my advice is just carry on. Carry on spending time outdoors with friends doing new things, noticing things you have never noticed before, visiting places you haven't visited before - Birmingham has a lot of wild walks you don't need to go too far to find them. If it's getting cool wrap up warm. Make and take a packed lunch (try to make it waste free) for your journey, find a bench, stop chat and watch the world go by, before chasing a falling leaf, looking for blackberries or collecting a few tiny autumn gems to make a bit of temporary art back at home. Nature never closes it always has something new to offer and more memories to make.



Blackberries

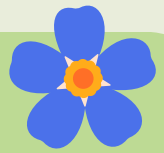
21st September - International Day of Peace

September 21 is recognized as the annual International Day of Peace.

Observances range from a moment of silence at noon to events such as peace walks, concerts, and volunteering in the community. The International Day of Peace celebrates the power of global solidarity for building a peaceful and sustainable world. This has never been so important at a time of unprecedented challenges. The barriers to peace are complex and steep - no one country can solve them alone. Doing so requires new forms of solidarity and joint action, starting as early as possible.



September - International Alzheimer month



World Alzheimer's Month takes place every September and World Alzheimer's Day is on 21 September each year. It's a global opportunity to raise dementia awareness and support people affected by the disease.

This World Alzheimer's Month, The Alzheimer Society is asking people affected by dementia to share your story. Make sure your voice is heard and share your experience of dementia – however it affects you and your family.

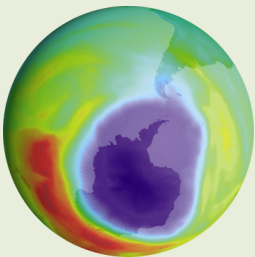
There are things you can do to reduce your own risk of developing dementia. These include keeping active, eating healthily and exercising your mind. There is a lot of evidence that lifestyle choices can affect our risk of developing dementia. Dementia risk is lowest in people who have healthy behaviours in mid-life (aged 40–65). No single behaviour is guaranteed to prevent dementia, and some are more easy to change than others.

Depression is a mental health condition that affects at least one in five people in the UK. People who have had periods of depression in their life also have a higher risk of developing dementia.

Social isolation can greatly increase a person's risk of dementia. Engaging in social activities may help to build up your brain's ability to relieve stress and improve your mood.

For people with dementia, research shows that meaningful outdoor activity and connection with the natural environment can have a positive effect and can slow down the progression of the symptoms.

<https://dementiaadventure.org/resources/the-benefits-of-nature/>



16th September - World Ozone Day

The Montreal Protocol is rightly hailed as a multilateralism success story.

It united the world to phase out ozone-depleting substances putting the ozone layer on the path to recovery and protecting all life on Earth. On this World Ozone Day, we also celebrate its climate action.

Phasing out ozone-depleting substances has proven to be a powerful tool for climate action that has helped slow global warming, for example, postponing the first ice-free Arctic summer by up to 15 years.

Through the Kigali Amendment, climate action is being further accelerated. Countries commit to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – powerful climate-warming gases that replaced ozone-depleting substances in the various sectors. If the Amendment is fully ratified and implemented, up to 0.5°C of warming could be avoided by 2100.

<https://ozone.unep.org/ozone-day/montreal-protocol-advancing-climate-action>



Birmingham City of Nature - Actions for the city

Opportunities to help citizens make better use of green space outside of their home for food growing or communal gardens (G6).

The end of September is traditionally when the Harvest Festival of Thanksgiving is celebrated for the food grown on the land in the UK. It is about giving thanks for a successful growing year as summer ends and winter starts to approach. The festival is also about giving thanks for all the good and positive things in people's lives, such as family and friendships. Harvest Festivals have traditionally been held in churches but also in schools and other gathering places. People bring produce from their garden, allotment or farm, and even cooked or preserved food like jams and pickles. Often there is a communal Harvest Supper at which some of the produce may be eaten. Typically surplus produce is given away to local charities.

The City of Nature Plan has an action to help residents to use the green spaces outside of their home for growing food or communal gardening. Everyone should be able to experience the physical and mental health benefits of harvesting home grown food, even if it is only a few potatoes, tomatoes or onions and sharing that experience with others.



Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

International eat an apple day is the third Saturday of September.

There is no better apple than one you have picked for yourself from a tree, apart from one that you have picked from a tree you have grown or at least planted.

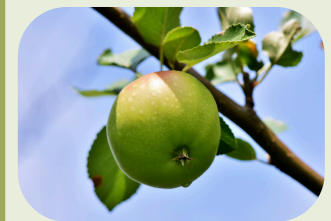
Growing up we always had apple trees in the garden, two eaters and one cooker as my Mom called them. I would always try one before it was quite ripe enough and I can still remember the way they tasted - so sour they seemed to suck the moisture from your mouth. My Mom used to say the tree gives you the apple when it is ripe if you have to pulled it off the tree it won't be ready. She was right, hold and gently lift an apple if it falls into your hand it should be ready to eat.

An apple is not only a tasty snack research suggests that eating an apple a day can have a positive impact on your body and brain. It can improve the health of your blood vessels and wake up your gut bacteria. Eating apples is linked to a reduced risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. They're packed full of goodies – fibre, vitamins and important chemical compounds called flavonoids. Flavonoids are concentrated in the skin of apples. They are produced by plants to protect them from stress, sunlight and disease. Just by eating these plants, you can acquire similar protective effects!

The good news is that cooked apples are just as good as raw, so a yummy apple crumble (that includes the apple skin) is also good for your health. Just have to get some extra steps in to work off the extra calories, it's worth it though. What is your favourite apple treat?

Email me your stories at: Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk

Debbie Needle - Community Facilitator - Urban Nature Development Project



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Circular Economy

Alongside the support we're offering to help suppliers reduce emissions, businesses in Birmingham and Solihull can also get UK-SPF funded help to identify opportunities to save waste and costs through industrial symbiosis. The Circular Economy for Birmingham and Solihull project does this by helping SMEs to identify by-products and wastes that can be used by other organisations. The project then facilitates introductions to potential partner companies and support businesses to realise these new business opportunities and reduce waste.

Everything from sludge, oil, steam, and old furniture can be considered through the scheme and getting involved could help reduce costs, save energy, learn resource efficiency knowledge, and help companies comply with environmental standards.

<https://international-synergies.com/ourprojects/cebas-resource-efficiency-project/>

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero Plan you can contact the team on:
routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk



Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with us for nature's recovery across Birmingham and the Black Country; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife. Get involved and find out more about their events in Birmingham and the Black Country.

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/>



BOSF - Find you local Friends of Open Spaces Group

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. They produce regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. They can also put you in touch with other groups who have experiences that might be useful to you.

<https://bosf.org.uk/members/>



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