

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

Merry, merry sparrow!

Under leaves so green, A happy blossom

Sees you, swift as arrow, Seek your cradle narrow

The Blossom - William Blake 1757- 1827

Health - Naturally

Stress awareness month #LeadWithLove is a powerful call to action rooted in the principles of Unconditional Positive Regard:

<https://www.stress.org.uk/stress-awareness-month-2025/>

This theme encourages us to approach ourselves and others with kindness, compassion, and acceptance, no matter the challenges we face.

In today's world, where stress often thrives in the midst of conflict, tension, and division, we believe that love is the universal force capable of shifting the narrative. By choosing love as our starting point, we embrace empathy, prioritize understanding, and create positive change in every interaction.



Learn more - Dancing

International Dance Day is on April 29th.

It is an annual celebration of how dancing positively impacts our lives. The human body's ability to move, groove, pop, and lock has captivated the way we interact with music and express ourselves artistically.

Dancing is an action shared by both professionals and amateurs alike and is enjoyed in all parts of the world. This day is all about celebrating the history of dance and recognizing its monumental place across all cultures. Challenge yourself by learning a new dance you've always wanted to know. You can do this by yourself or with a group of friends! Whether it's your best macarena or ballroom waltz.

<https://www.international-dance-day.org/internationaldanceday.html>



City of Nature Programme update

With longer days and nature coming to life, April is the perfect time to celebrate our connection to the environment. The "pathways to nature connectedness" are frameworks that help individuals improve their human-nature relationship, and include sensory contact, emotion, meaning, beauty, and compassion. One way we want you to experience more connectedness is to encourage people to combine nature with creativity.



Although the project funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund has come to an end the work goes on delivering the City of Nature plan developed through the project. As part of the City of Nature Plan, we're embracing the season of renewal with new ways of working that are even more inclusive and collaborative but also creative. Although there are still challenges ahead there should still be time to celebrate everything that is happening across the city to help nature recover. Let's get creative this summer.



Nature has long been a source of inspiration, offering peace, creativity, and a sense of belonging. As we work to enhance green spaces through the City of Nature Plan, we want to explore the different ways people connect with nature and what it means for well-being, creativity, and community.



For some, nature is a place of reflection and mindfulness—a quiet walk in the woods, listening to birdsong, or watching the sunset can bring a deep sense of calm. For others, it's about creativity and storytelling, drawing inspiration from the natural world for art, music, or writing. Many find connection through hands-on experiences, such as gardening, foraging, or volunteering in conservation efforts.

We're also celebrating the joy of books and reading, encouraging everyone to explore nature through literature—whether it's discovering wildlife guides, outdoor story time in parks, or borrowing environmental books from local libraries.



As we continue to develop Birmingham's green spaces, we want to learn more about how people connect with nature. What inspires you? Whether it's a favourite park, a childhood memory, or a creative pursuit, we'd love to hear your stories as we shape a city where everyone can experience the benefits of nature. This month, we're marking Earth Day by looking back at some of the ways people have used the arts to express their thoughts about nature during the Future Parks Accelerator Project.

As the evenings grow lighter, take the opportunity to explore Birmingham's growing network of green spaces. Whether it's reading under a blossoming tree, taking an evening stroll, or volunteering in your local park, there are plenty of ways to connect with nature this April!

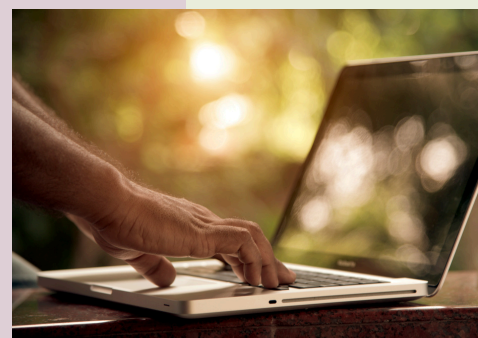
If you would like to find out more about:

- Birmingham City Councils City of Nature Plan
- Green Champions Volunteering Programme
- Young Green Champions for Schools
- The City of Nature Alliance
- Ranger Service Healthy Parks Programme

Please contact us at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk



There will be opportunities to join webinars, workshops and online meetings covering a range of subjects, starting in May 2025. We will post events on Naturally Birmingham social media and email out through the Green Champion mailing list.



Community Garden Week

1st - 7th April 2025

Community Garden Week, celebrated annually, is a time dedicated to honouring the vital role of community gardens in fostering connection, sustainability, and well-being. This week-long celebration typically occurs during the first week of April, although dates may vary depending on regional initiatives.



Community gardens serve as vibrant hubs where individuals come together to cultivate friendships, nurture the earth, and harvest the fruits of their labour. They play a pivotal role in promoting access to fresh produce, beautifying neighbourhoods, and empowering communities to thrive.

<https://ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/community-garden-grants/>

Birmingham has hundreds of community gardens, this is just one example.

Handsworth Park Community Garden – Located in Handsworth Park, this community garden focuses on creating a sensory space with year-round colour. It encourages local involvement in gardening and supports biodiversity through wildflowers and native plants.

Public Health's food growing map

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50279/food_revolution/2921/growing_food

Hints and Tips on Community Gardening

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/community-gardening-2/>



Walk to work Day - 4th April 2025

Walk to Work Day, observed annually on the first Friday in April, encourages individuals to embrace walking as a healthy and eco-friendly means of commuting.

The day promotes the benefits of incorporating physical activity into daily routines while reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion.

As cities around the world grapple with issues such as air pollution and sedentary lifestyles, Walk to Work Day offers a timely reminder of the positive impact that walking can have on both personal health and the environment.

By choosing to walk rather than drive or take public transportation, individuals can improve their cardiovascular health, reduce stress levels, and contribute to cleaner, greener communities.

How we work has changed drastically since the pandemic. Many of us still travel to the office, but working hours (and locations) are now a lot more flexible for employers.

This page is for you if you've returned to your workplace, are continuing to work from home or are doing both – and it's for anyone who wants to get a bit more active.

Just taking a 20-minute walk on your lunch break can have fantastic health benefits, helping to stave off chronic conditions like heart disease, certain cancers and diabetes.

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/workplaces/>



Micro Volunteering Day - 15th April 2025

International Micro volunteering Day, celebrated annually on April 15th, encourages individuals and organizations to engage in small, impactful volunteering activities, showcasing the power of collective effort in addressing global challenges.

What it is:

Micro volunteering is about making a difference with small, focused actions, rather than requiring long-term commitments.

Why it's important:

It's a way to engage people who might not have the time or resources for traditional volunteering, allowing them to contribute to causes they care about.

Digital & At-Home Micro-Volunteering

- **Log Wildlife Sightings:** Use apps like iNaturalist or Zooniverse to record local wildlife and contribute to citizen science projects.
- **Join Online Conservation Campaigns:** Sign petitions, write to local representatives, or share environmental awareness posts on social media.
- **Reduce Digital Carbon Footprint:** Unsubscribe from unwanted emails and switch to an eco-friendly search engine like Ecosia.
- **Map Green Spaces & Litter Spots:** Help organizations identify areas in need of clean-ups by reporting issues via apps.

Outdoor & Community-Based Actions

- **Quick Litter Pick-Ups:** Spend just 10 minutes a day collecting litter in your local park or street.
- **Seed Bombing & Guerrilla Gardening:** Scatter native wildflower seeds in neglected areas to support pollinators.
- **Tree & Plant Care:** Water newly planted trees in dry periods or adopt a local tree for maintenance.
- **Eco-Transport Advocacy:** Encourage cycling and walking by sharing local safe routes or participating in community surveys.

Support Environmental Groups in Small Ways

- **Donate Unused Items:** Pass on gardening tools, seeds, or books to local community gardens.
- **Write Reviews & Promote Green Businesses:** Help ethical and sustainable companies grow by leaving positive reviews online.
- **Support Urban Farming Projects:** Buy locally grown food or volunteer a few hours at a community garden.

These actions, though small, collectively contribute to significant environmental improvements.



2025 City Nature Challenge - EcoRecord

From April 25th-28th, Birmingham and the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall & Wolverhampton) will be taking part in the 2025 City Nature Challenge - a fun, free, global challenge to see which city is wildest!

Will you help them show the world how wild we REALLY are?

The City Nature Challenge is an annual competition between cities all over the world to see how many wild species their citizens can spot over the space of four days. As well as being a fun activity, it generates useful species information that helps us to monitor the state of wildlife across our region and target our nature conservation activities to better protect wildlife.

During last year's challenge we collectively managed make over 12,866 observations of a massive 1,340 different species! This result meant that Birmingham and the Black Country made more wildlife observations than any other UK city area and the 9th most of any city in Europe!

In 2025 there will be more cities than ever taking part, including our neighbours in Coventry, Solihull, Staffordshire and Warwickshire! We need you to help us beat our total in 2025!

How to take part?

That's the easy bit - simply make a record of any wildlife you spot in Birmingham and the Black Country from April 25-28th, whether that's wildflowers in your garden or a list of birds from your local nature reserve. Every record counts and will help towards our total and move us up the global leader board!

The easiest way to make your records count is to use the free iNaturalist app or website. Simply take a photo of any plant or animal and the app's inbuilt software will help you to identify it whilst sending the record straight to us! You can watch a video guide to using iNaturalist below. Alternatively, you can email any records of wildlife you've spotted to enquiries@ecorecord.org.uk.

Host a CNC event?

If you are an organization, group or enthusiastic individual and you'd like to organise your own City Nature Challenge wildlife recording event between April 26th-29th, that would be amazing!

This could be as simple as planning to spend some time as a group, walking a route around your local green space and taking photos of any wildlife you see! If you already have an event planned for that weekend you could consider adding a quick City Nature Challenge recording session as part of it.

If you are planning an event, or have any questions, please let us know by emailing enquiries@ecorecord.org.uk as we would love to hear about it!

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



Earth Day - 22nd April 2025

The theme for Earth Day 2025 is **OUR POWER, OUR PLANET**, inviting everyone around the globe to unite behind renewable energy, and to triple the global generation of clean electricity by 2030. **How?** By joining us in Earth Action Day, encouraging all to take action—educate, advocate, and mobilize. Pledge an Earth Action on social media. Attend/plan/register a local event. Integrate Earth Day lessons into your curricula.



Local leaders in towns and cities worldwide have the greatest capacity to impact the economic well-being of their constituents, and at the same time protect the quality of the air, water and environment immediately around them. They are uniquely positioned to directly respond to community needs and bring people together. EARTHDAY.ORG is calling on local officials to join thousands of others towns and cities across the world who have prioritized sustainable economic growth, public health and combatting the effects of climate change by backing renewable energy and joining the Earth Action Day.



The Earth Action Day is an opportunity for everyone to engage in a constructive dialogue about how renewable energy: solar, wind, geo-thermal, hydro and tidal, can benefit their community. Be it providing new jobs, improving air quality, increasing city revenue – the Earth Action Day will provide a town hall-style forum for citizens, business leaders and government officials to come together to discuss their clean energy options.

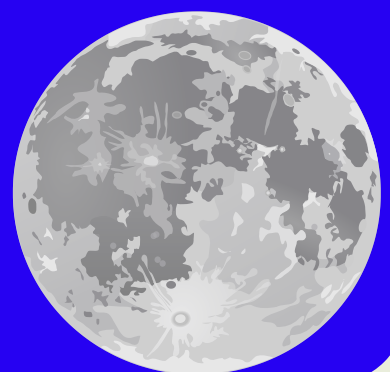


Look up at the sky - 13th, 14th ,15th April

13th April The Full Moon (Pink) marks a celestial spectacle that has captivated humanity for centuries. As the lunar cycle reaches its peak, the night sky is illuminated by the brilliance of the full moon, casting a magical glow and stirring wonder in the hearts of stargazers worldwide.

14th April Look Up at the Sky Day invites us all to lift our eyes heavenward on April 14th and marvel at the boundless beauty and wonder of the skies above. It's a day to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the vastness of the universe, finding inspiration and solace in the ever-changing canvas of clouds, stars, and celestial phenomena.

15st April International Dark Sky Week takes place on 15th April each year, marking a celebration of our shared universe and the importance of preserving our natural nightscapes. Whether you're a stargazer, an environmental enthusiast, or simply curious about the wonders of the night sky, this annual event offers something for everyone.



April Actions for the City of Nature

As spring flourishes, April brings a renewed focus on delivering action for the City of Nature plan. With longer days and a growing connection to the outdoors, this month will see key developments in urban greening, biodiversity initiatives, and community engagement.

Greener Spaces, Stronger Communities

April will witness the expansion of enhancing green corridors across Birmingham. Volunteers and local groups will continue habitat restoration projects, ensuring parks and natural spaces support wildlife and climate resilience.

Nature & Culture in Harmony

Collaborations with local libraries to kick off outdoor book clubs in parks, encouraging people to engage with literature in natural settings. Artistic and cultural events in green spaces will provide creative ways for residents to connect with the environment.

The Great British Spring Clean and Great Big School Clean 2025

Runs until 6th April, so you can still pledge to pick up a bag of litter – or more.

Can we count on you to show your love for where you live by helping clean up the places and spaces we care about, as Keep Britain Tidy celebrates the landmark 10th time they have run the campaign? This year they are spreading the word that the environment belongs to everyone! Since they launched the campaign, millions of #LitterHeroes from communities, faith groups, schools, businesses and local authorities have united to help tackle litter – we all have a role to play.

Many volunteers regularly find 'retro rubbish' that was dropped many years ago but is still causing harm to our environment today, releasing greenhouse gases as it slowly breaks down in our soil and water, which contributes to the climate crisis. No one wants to see litter dropped in our green spaces, but litter-picking is a simple action that anyone can do to make an immediate and visible difference to the environment where we live, work and play.

April is a time of growth and renewal, and through collective effort, we will continue making Birmingham a thriving City of Nature for all. Keep an eye out for upcoming events and ways to get involved!



April Wildlife in UK Parks: A Season of Renewal

April is a vibrant month in UK parks, as spring reaches full bloom and wildlife activity surges. Longer daylight hours and rising temperatures bring parks and green spaces to life, offering a perfect opportunity to observe nature's seasonal transformations.

Birds on the Move

Many migratory birds return from their wintering grounds. Listen for the melodic song of chiffchaffs, blackcaps, and willow warblers filling the trees.

Swallows and house martins also begin to arrive, darting through the skies in search of insects. In urban parks, robins, blue tits, and blackbirds are busy building nests, and you may even spot fluffy chicks in well-sheltered areas.

Blossoms & Bees

April is peak time for spring blossoms, with cherry, hawthorn, and apple trees bursting into flower. These blooms provide a vital nectar source for early pollinators, such as bumblebees and butterflies, including peacocks and orange tips.

Keep an eye out for bees buzzing around dandelions and primroses, both essential food sources for emerging insects.

Mammals & Amphibians Stirring

As temperatures rise, hedgehogs come out of hibernation, foraging for food in gardens and parks.

Frogs and toads can also be seen in ponds, having laid their spawn in March. If you visit a wetland area, look out for smooth newts swimming in shallow waters.

Earth Day & Spring Adventures

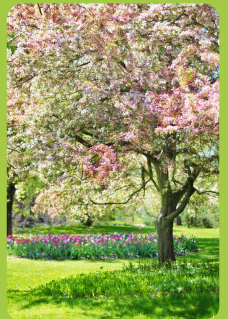
With Earth Day on April 22nd, it's the perfect time to reconnect with nature. Consider joining a local tree-planting event, a guided wildlife walk, or simply take a moment to appreciate the sights and sounds of spring in your nearest green space.

Birmingham is one of the greenest cities in Europe - with over 600 publicly accessible parks and green spaces across the city. These spaces cover over 4,700 hectares (47 Km²) - for comparison, this is three times the size of the city of Lichfield (14.02 Km²) or 1.5x the city of Worcester (33.3 Km²).

We have Local Nature Reserves, a National Nature Reserve which is also a SSSI, Sites of importance to Nature Conservation and sites of local importance to nature conservation.

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/findapark>

This April, take advantage of the longer days and explore your local park – there's so much to see and celebrate!



National Gardening Week: April 28th to May 4th

The gardening theme continues at the end of April and in to May.

The focus of National Gardening Week in 2025 is new and beginner gardeners. We know that creating your first outdoor garden or starting out as an indoor 'plant parent' can be a daunting experience – so we are supporting new and curious gardeners as they start their growing journey.

From beginner gardening tips, how-to guides and videos, to a series of easy gardening challenges to help all keen gardeners to develop a lifelong love of gardening – the RHS can support you every step of the way.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/national-gardening-week>

Whether it's a patio, a window box, a windowsill or your front doorstep, even tiny spaces have the potential to bring you gardening joy.

Many houseplants are easy to grow, long lived and can be very rewarding. Whether you are a fan of large architectural plants to use as focal points in a room, miniature plants for growing in terraria, or fascinated by collecting and growing a particular group of plants like orchids or cacti, there are houseplants available to suit everyone's tastes.

Why are urban gardens so important?

- **They provide an estimated 85% of the nectar available in urban areas**

Cities are expanding all across the world. Collectively, residential gardens cover 16-36% of urban land area worldwide. These gardens offer a unique opportunity for pollinator conservation, in which the combined action of many people can have a major impact on nectar resources at a landscape scale.

- **They can support a high diversity of pollinators**

The diversity of pollinators in urban gardens is often higher than that in surrounding rural areas, in which nectar resources have declined due to changes in land use. Gardens are often actively managed to provide diverse displays of flowering plants, which in turn can support diverse communities of pollinators.

- **They provide a more consistent source of nectar than a rural landscape**

Seasonal timing of nectar resources has a big impact on the success of pollinating insects. In rural farmland, nectar availability fluctuates massively over time, with supply over 10 times greater at some times than at others.



Opportunities in green spaces to explore and celebrate art and culture and work with libraries to organise book clubs in parks (14)

Opportunities in green spaces to explore and celebrate art and culture and work with libraries to organise book clubs in parks (14)

1. Outdoor Book Clubs – Partner with local libraries to host monthly book club meetings in parks, featuring nature-themed or local interest books.
2. Storytelling & Poetry Sessions – Organize public readings and spoken word events in green spaces to celebrate literature and oral storytelling.
3. Creative Writing & Art Workshops – Provide opportunities for people to engage in nature-inspired art and writing activities.
4. Library-Park Collaborations – Set up “Little Free Libraries” or pop-up reading corners in parks to encourage outdoor reading.
5. Guided Literary & Heritage Walks – Organize walks that explore the historical, cultural, and literary significance of local green spaces.

These actions will help integrate art, culture, and literature into green spaces, making them more vibrant and accessible to diverse communities.



Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

As April arrives, the City of Nature awakens with fresh blooms, birdsong, and the promise of longer, sunlit days. There's something magical about this time of year—a shift from the quiet dormancy of winter to the vibrant hum of life returning to our parks, gardens, and green spaces.

One of my favourite childhood memories of April is the simple joy of spotting catkins and pussy willow in my local park. It was a sign that winter had truly loosened its grip and that soon, we'd be playing outside until dusk, our shoes damp from the morning dew and our hands filled with dandelion wishes.

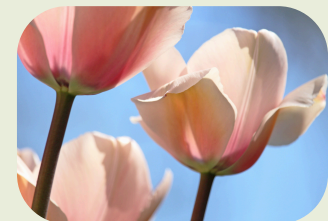
April is also a time of renewal and reconnection—with nature, with each other, and with the places we hold dear. I recently spoke with a long-time resident, Margaret, who shared her own spring tradition: an annual walk under the cherry blossoms that line the riverbank. She told me how she started this tradition with her children, and now, decades later, she takes her grandchildren along the same path, watching their laughter blend with the rustling petals in the breeze.

Our parks tell stories, hold memories, and provide a space for new experiences. This month, we invite you to explore, reflect, and make your own April traditions—whether it's a picnic under the blooming trees, a quiet moment on a park bench, or simply feeling the sun on your face after months of grey skies.

Wherever April takes you, may it be filled with wonder, warmth, and the beauty of nature's grand reawakening.

See you in the parks!

Debbie Needle
Editor, City of Nature Newsletter



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Stop Food Waste Day

Stop Food Waste Day, observed annually on 30th April, is a global initiative dedicated to raising awareness about the staggering amount of food wasted worldwide and inspiring action to reduce food waste at every level of the food supply chain.

Whether you're a chef, consumer, business owner, or environmental advocate, this day serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address food waste and its impact on the environment, economy, and society.

Love Food Hate Waste says: We buy a bag of potatoes. We eat half the bag. The rest? They end up in the bin. It's an all too familiar pattern happening in kitchens across the UK. And it is crazy that the packaging makes us buy more than we need.

Our research shows that if all apples, bananas and potatoes were sold loose instead of in bags sold by weight, we could save 60,000 tonnes of food each year. That's 8.2 million shopping baskets! <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>

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 those interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. You can register your group to receive regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. If you want to start a group to care for a green space near you they can support you to do that.

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



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Heritage Fund

