

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

O hushed October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all; - Robert Frost



Health - Naturally

World Mental Health Day – 10 October

As autumn settles in and the days become shorter, it can be tempting to spend less time outdoors. But our relationship with nature doesn't have to end when summer does. Getting outside, even for a short time, can give us space to breathe, move, notice what is around us and step away from some of the pressures of everyday life. A walk through a park, watching birds from a window, noticing the changing leaves or simply feeling daylight on our faces can all help us stay connected with the natural world. And perhaps that connection becomes even more important as we head towards winter. Nature doesn't disappear in October. It changes. There are different colours, sounds, weather and wildlife to notice and reasons to keep going outside. This World Mental Health Day, perhaps the simplest message is: keep a little nature in your day.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/social-care-and-your-rights/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>



Learn More About - Autumn Leaves

One of the great pleasures of October is watching green trees gradually turn yellow, gold, orange and red. But where do all those colours come from? During spring and summer, leaves contain lots of chlorophyll – the green pigment that helps plants capture sunlight and turn its energy into food through photosynthesis. As autumn arrives, shorter days and cooler temperatures signal that winter is coming. Trees begin to stop producing chlorophyll and recover useful nutrients from their leaves before they fall. As the green chlorophyll disappears, other pigments that were there all along become visible. Carotenoids give us yellows and oranges, while some trees also produce anthocyanins, which can create brilliant reds and purples. Eventually, the tree forms a layer of cells where each leaf joins the branch. The connection closes, the leaf falls, and the tree conserves resources through the colder months. So autumn isn't simply a landscape shutting down. It is a season of carefully managed change. And those spectacular autumn colours? Some of them were there all summer. We just couldn't see them until the green disappeared.



It's Brocktober - 6th October is National Badger Day

National Badger Day, a chance to celebrate one of Britain's most recognisable native mammals. And you don't have to travel into the countryside to live alongside badgers.

Badgers can be found across Birmingham. They share our city, making their homes in and around woodlands, parks, allotments, railway corridors, gardens and other green spaces. Most of the time we simply don't see them.

Badgers are largely nocturnal. While Birmingham sleeps, they are travelling along familiar routes, searching for food and returning to networks of underground tunnels and chambers called setts. Sometimes the signs they leave behind – paths, footprints, digging or sett entrances – are the only indication that they are our neighbours. They are also part of the ecology of the places they inhabit. Their digging moves and aerates soil, their foraging affects the habitats around them and they can disperse seeds as they travel.

Badgers and their setts are protected by law, and it is illegal to deliberately kill, injure or persecute a badger or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to a sett. Perhaps National Badger Day is also a useful reminder of what it means to be a City of Nature.

Nature in Birmingham isn't confined to designated nature reserves or the places we deliberately make for wildlife. It moves through the whole city, often unseen and often while we're asleep. So next time you walk through your local green space, remember: there may be another shift starting just as you are heading home.

Physical Characteristics

- **Appearance:** They have wide, stocky bodies, short legs, wedge-shaped heads, and long snouts. **Size:** European badgers typically weigh between 8 to 14 kg (17 to 31 lbs) and measure around 75 to 100 cm long.
- **Status:** They serve as the largest land predators in the UK.

Diet and Behavior

- Roughly 80% of a European badger's diet consists of earthworms, with individuals consuming hundreds in a single night. They also eat small mammals, insects, fruit, roots, and bulbs when worms are scarce.
- They emerge primarily at night to forage and hunt.
- Despite their short stature, they can sprint at speeds up to 19 mph (30 km/h).

Homes and Social Life

- **Setts:** They live in elaborate underground networks of tunnels and chambers called setts, which can remain active and expand across centuries.
- **Clans:** European badgers are unusually social and live in family groups known as clans or cetes, usually containing 6 to 8 adults.
- **Cleanliness:** They keep their underground homes tidy by using designated outdoor latrine pits and changing their leaf-and-grass bedding daily.



UK Fungus Day – The World Beneath Our Feet

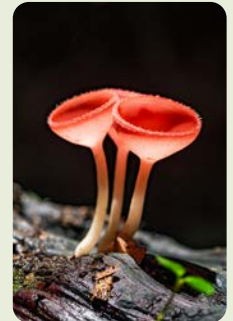
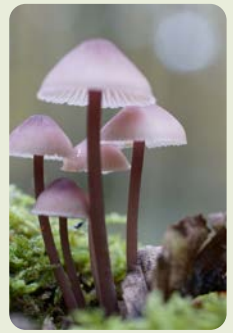
October is a wonderful month for spotting fungi. A walk through one of Birmingham's parks or woodlands can suddenly reveal mushrooms and other fruiting bodies appearing amongst fallen leaves, beside paths, on old trees and across grassland. But what we see above ground is only part of the story.

Much of a fungus can exist as a largely hidden network of tiny threads called mycelium, growing through soil, wood and other material. The mushrooms we notice are often simply the fruiting bodies – a little like seeing apples on a much larger tree.

Fungi perform some of nature's essential recycling. They help break down fallen leaves, dead wood and other organic matter, returning nutrients to the ecosystem. Many also form remarkable partnerships with plants and trees. Fungal networks associated with roots can help plants access water and nutrients, while receiving sugars produced by the plant in return. That means the old log slowly rotting beneath the trees isn't necessarily waste or neglect. It can be habitat, food and part of a living process that keeps the woodland working. Birmingham's parks, woodlands, gardens and other green spaces give us plenty of opportunities to discover fungi. Autumn is a particularly good time to start looking – although fungi are around us throughout the year.

So this UK Fungus Day, look down as well as up. Notice the mushrooms, brackets and other fungi appearing around you – but remember that what you can see is only a glimpse of a much bigger story. Beneath our feet, another part of Birmingham's living city is busy at work.

<https://www.ukfungusday.co.uk/>

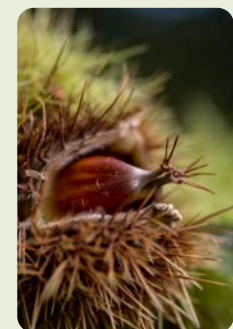
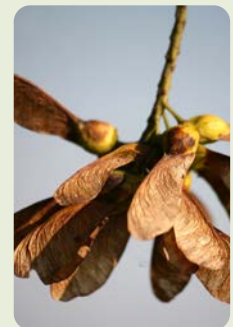


Seed Gathering Season – What Will We Carry Forward?

Autumn is a time for gathering. From 21 September to 21 October, the Tree Council celebrates Seed Gathering Season, encouraging us to head into our parks, woods and green spaces and discover the seeds, nuts and fruits that could become the trees and hedgerows of the future.

There is something wonderfully hopeful about gathering a seed. It is small. It represents what has already grown – but also what might grow next. And perhaps that's a useful way to think about our City of Nature too. Across Birmingham this year, people have planted, watered, surveyed, walked, talked, taught, volunteered, organised events, looked after green spaces, shared knowledge, built relationships and tried new ideas. Some of those things have already produced visible results. Others may still be very small indeed.

October gives us a moment to notice them. Over the next few pages, we want to celebrate some of the people who have been making Birmingham a City of Nature this year – and gather some of the learning, ideas and relationships we want to carry with us into what comes next. Because gathering isn't the end of growing. Sometimes it is how the next season begins.



After the Harvest - Preparing for the Future

Harvest celebrations have a long history. For generations, communities have marked the point when the main crops had been safely gathered from the fields – a moment to give thanks for what the land had provided, to share food and to celebrate the work that had brought everyone through another growing season. Our modern Harvest Festival carries forward many of those traditions.



Harvest Festival may have passed, but October is still a season of finding and gathering.

Bringing in the harvest was never the end of the year's work. In many ways, it marked the beginning of a different kind of responsibility. First, you had to look at what you had grown. What flourished? What struggled? What surprised you? What had the weather, the soil and the growing season taught you? The harvest itself contained information for next year.



Then you had to decide what to do with what had been gathered in. Some could be enjoyed immediately. Some needed to be stored and carefully looked after through the winter. Some would be preserved. Some shared with others. And some of the very best would be saved as seed for whatever came next.



Underlying all of this was perhaps the most important question: does everyone have enough?

There is something in that for Birmingham's City of Nature. Across the city this year, people have been growing things – sometimes literally – but also projects, skills, knowledge, confidence, connections and relationships.



Now is a good time to gather some of that harvest and to celebrate what has grown, certainly, but also to learn from what didn't. To share what we have discovered rather than keeping it to ourselves. To look after the relationships, people and projects that will need care through the winter. To notice where the harvest has been plentiful and where there are still gaps. And to think carefully about what we save as seed for the future.



Gathering the harvest isn't the end of the story. What we share, what we learn, what we care for and what we save now will help determine what we do next.

What has been growing over the last five years?

An Alliance – an ecosystem of people, organisations, knowledge and relationships.

Five years ago, we were asking a question: what would happen if nature wasn't an afterthought, but the starting point? What would that change?

It quickly became clear that the answer couldn't belong to Parks alone. Nature connects with health, housing, children, jobs, food, transport, climate, culture and community. If Birmingham was really going to become a City of Nature, we needed people working in all those different areas to be part of it.

During the Future Parks Accelerator project, we began testing that idea through five parks in Bordesley and Highgate. People working with trees, wildlife, food growing, health, play, art, active travel and communities came together. Many were already doing extraordinary work across Birmingham; the important thing was beginning to connect it.

One of the things that grew from those early seeds was the Birmingham City of Nature Alliance.

Today, the Alliance brings together organisations, community groups, businesses and public bodies around a shared ambition: a greener, healthier and fairer Birmingham.

But perhaps its real harvest is the relationships. People know more about what others are doing. Connections have been made between organisations that might previously have worked separately. Knowledge and opportunities can be shared. Individual projects can become part of something bigger.

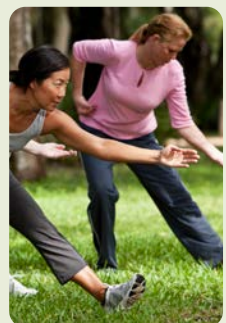
And the Alliance itself is still growing. That matters because a 25-year City of Nature Plan was never going to be delivered by one organisation – or even one generation of organisations and people.

Five years in, perhaps one of the things we have learned is that building the relationships is part of building the City of Nature.

They are something worth gathering, sharing and caring for as we move into the next season.

In this month's newsletter and over the next few months you will find out more about the **Birmingham City of Nature Alliance**, the organisations involved and how they work together to improve the lives of people living in, working in or just visiting Birmingham.

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birmingham-city-of-nature-alliance/>



City of Nature Programme Update - Who's doing what now?

Who's doing what now? sounds slightly like something Homer Simpson might ask. And over the last few months, while Birmingham's Parks and Green Spaces service has been changing, it has occasionally felt a little like that too.

But, in plain English, you probably want to know what the new picture looks like.

Well, most importantly there isn't one person who "does the park". Looking after Birmingham's green spaces takes different kinds of people doing different jobs.

There are people looking after the places themselves – making sure sites are safe, maintained and working as they should. At our larger destination parks, teams have particular responsibility for those important sites.

There are people looking after nature – managing habitats, woodlands and biodiversity, surveying wildlife and helping us make better decisions about the natural environment.

There are Rangers, combining practical conservation and site knowledge with something equally important: working with people. They support volunteers, schools and community groups, run activities and help people understand and enjoy the nature around them.

There are people helping communities get involved – connecting with residents, volunteers and partners and creating more opportunities for people to take part.

And behind all of that are people dealing with trees, allotments, playgrounds, events, development, machinery, repairs and the many practical things needed to keep a city's green spaces functioning.

The important bit is that these aren't separate worlds.

A single park might need several of those skills in the same week – sometimes on the same day.

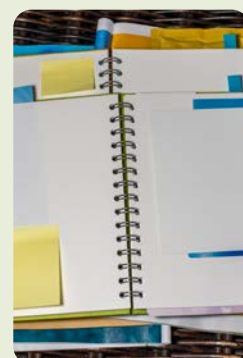
Many of the people are new. Some are moving into different responsibilities and the teams themselves are still learning how they fit together.

So rather than introduce everybody before they've had time to find their feet, we'll do that gradually over the coming months.

For now, perhaps the simplest answer to "Who's doing what?" is:

Lots of people, doing different things, increasingly as one Parks and Green Spaces team.

And we'll help you get to know them as they settle in.



Meet the Alliance: Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

A City of Nature isn't only made by organisations looking after nature. It is made by people looking after the places that matter to them.

For more than 20 years, Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) has been connecting and supporting people who care for Birmingham's parks and open spaces – from established Friends groups to, as BOSF rather wonderfully puts it, “just two people and a dog”. Today its network includes more than 140 member groups caring for parks, woodlands, community gardens, allotments and other valued green spaces across Birmingham. And what a contribution they make.

Between April 2025 and March 2026 alone, volunteers in Birmingham's Friends groups recorded 120,094 hours caring for their local parks and open spaces. But hours only tell part of the story. Friends groups plant trees and flowers, organise events, improve habitats, pick litter, raise funds, welcome people, share local knowledge and speak up for the places they know and love.

BOSF helps those individual groups become part of something bigger – providing advice and practical resources, connecting people and helping local experience and voices travel across the city. If we're gathering Birmingham's City of Nature harvest this autumn, the contribution of Friends groups is already in the storehouse.

Thousands of individual acts of care, adding up across a city. Find out more about Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, discover its projects and resources, or find a Friends group near you. <https://bosf.org.uk/>



and - Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust

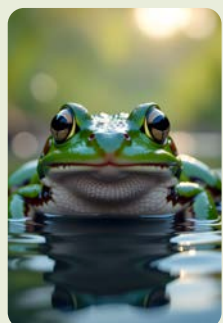
Being a City of Nature means recognising that wildlife doesn't stop where the countryside ends. The Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust has been making that case for more than 45 years. Founded in 1980 as the Urban Wildlife Group, it was part of a growing movement that helped put urban wildlife firmly on the conservation map.

Today the Trust works across Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, protecting and restoring habitats while helping people connect with the nature around them. In Birmingham, that work can be seen in places such as Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood, Deer's Leap Wood, EcoPark and Centre of the Earth, but its influence reaches far beyond individual nature reserves.

The Trust works at landscape scale – restoring rivers, improving woodlands, creating meadows and other habitats, growing locally sourced woodland plants and helping connect fragmented green spaces so that wildlife can move through our urban landscape. Just as importantly, it connects people with that work. Its current Championing Nature programme, for example, is bringing nature-based education to Birmingham schools, prioritising those with the least access to green space.

So what does the Wildlife Trust bring to our City of Nature harvest? Knowledge of the wildlife already here, expertise to help it recover, and decades of experience demonstrating that nature belongs in the heart of an urban landscape.

Because Birmingham isn't a city with nature somewhere around its edges. It is on our doorstep too. <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/>



Birmingham Destination Parks - Always Developing

Over recent months we have been putting Birmingham's Destination Parks in focus. But perhaps there is another question worth asking: who keeps them moving forward? The new Parks and Green Spaces structure brings back something Birmingham once had more of – dedicated management for our major parks.

The new Destination Site Managers aren't simply there to keep an eye on what already exists. Their job includes developing long-term plans, improving visitor experiences, looking after conservation and infrastructure, working with communities and volunteers, finding investment and ensuring parks remain safe, accessible and welcoming. That distinction matters because a park is never really a finished article.

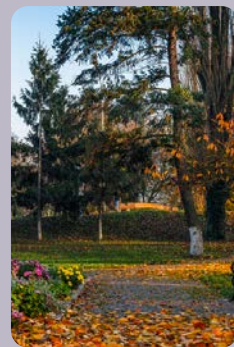
We can restore a building, improve a playground, plant trees, create a wetland or open a café and understandably feel that something has been achieved. But then people change. Nature changes. Climate changes. Buildings age. New opportunities appear and different communities begin using the space. Good park management therefore isn't about developing somewhere and then resting on our laurels.

There are good examples elsewhere. At Birmingham Botanical Gardens, community involvement is built into continuing management and development, using consultation, feedback and practical participation to understand what people need from the site. Recent research into successful parks services in Leeds and Islington found something similar: long-term thinking, visible staff and genuine community involvement help parks continue to improve.

That feels important for Birmingham's Destination Parks too. Today's manager isn't expected to have all the answers personally. They need to bring together the people who hold different parts of them – Rangers, operational teams, ecologists, Friends groups, volunteers, businesses, partners and, importantly, the people who use the park.

Perhaps the modern Destination Park Manager is less the keeper of a finished park and more the steward of a place that is continually becoming. Listening, learning, maintaining, adapting and developing. Because our best parks shouldn't simply preserve what previous generations created.

They should keep becoming better places for the generations using them now – and those still to come.



October – The Heart of Autumn

If September is autumn arriving and November is autumn preparing to leave, October is the season in full possession of itself.

The green is giving way to gold, amber and red. Leaves collect beneath our feet. Mornings arrive wrapped in mist and dew reveals the extraordinary architecture of spiders' webs that yesterday we walked straight past.

Then there are the fungi. They appear almost magically – pushing through grass, emerging from fallen wood and gathering beneath trees. Of course, we know there is science behind all of this. But October seems particularly good at reminding us that understanding how something happens doesn't make it any less wonderful. Perhaps that is why this month has always carried a little magic.

At the end of October comes Halloween, with roots entwined with older traditions including the Celtic festival of Samhain, marking the transition towards winter and the darker half of the year. Stories, folklore and customs have accumulated around this turning point for centuries.

And above us, October is changing too. The Draconid meteor shower peaks on 8–9 October, followed later in the month by the Orionids on 21–22 October – fragments left behind by Halley's Comet flashing briefly through our atmosphere. Then on 26 October comes the Hunter's Moon, the traditional name for the full Moon following the Harvest Moon.

Even our clocks join in. On 25 October they go back an hour, and suddenly evening darkness arrives noticeably earlier.

October asks us to use all our senses. Listen to leaves beneath your boots. Feel the first real chill in the air. Notice the smell of damp earth and fallen leaves. Look for fungi, berries, seeds and dew-covered webs. On a clear night, look up.

There is change everywhere.

Perhaps that's the real magic of October. Nothing is standing still – and for a few colourful, misty, mushroom-filled weeks, nature makes sure we notice.



Get Your Updates here - Sign Up - Don't miss out!

Many member organisations of the City of Nature Alliance have regular newsletters and updates that you can sign up to receive. They all cover different aspects of living in a Nature City, wildlife, friends of green space groups, tree people, nature and health, therapeutic horticulture and gardening and much, much more. Below you can find links to some of their websites to catch up with what is happening and sign up to their publications - so you never miss out. Find out how you can get involved.



Birmingham Parks and Green Spaces - Green Champions

If you want to receive this Green Champion Newsletter and online meeting invites directly via email please complete this form: <https://forms.office.com/e/Va1UFkAe4B> or email the City of Nature Team: Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk

Visit the Naturally Birmingham website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/> To find out more about:

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

Natural England - Health and Environment

Natural England have Health and Environment Lead roles to support and create connections between any Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, health practitioners, Community Wellbeing Roles, or local authorities interested in increasing the offer of Green / Blue Social Prescribing. To receive the West Midlands Natural England newsletter please contact: Natalie.Kenn@naturalengland.org.uk

BOSF - Birmingham Open Spaces Friends Groups

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. Find out more here: <https://bosf.org.uk/>

Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with BCC 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 here: <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/about>

Birmingham TreePeople - Urban Forest Volunteers

Birmingham TreePeople organise and oversee the Urban Forestry Volunteer Scheme in the city. It was originally set up as part of the Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme by Birmingham City Council's Tree Officers in 2016, and is now one of the largest group of its kind in the UK. For more information contact: <https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/about-us/urban-forest-volunteers/>

Thrive - In Kings Heath Park

Thrive has been using social and therapeutic horticulture and gardening to change people's lives since 1979. Discover the different ways to follow what's happening at Thrive, from news and campaigns to advice and developments in social therapeutic horticulture <https://www.thrive.org.uk/get-involved/keep-in-touch>

Birmingham's Park Ranger Service - Opening the door

- Linking People and Nature

We often say that Birmingham's parks and green spaces are there for everyone. But how does somebody know that?

There aren't signs at every entrance saying COME IN – WE'RE OPEN – YOU'RE WELCOME HERE. And we have found that how a place makes you feel works much better than a sign does. Does it look welcoming?

In fact, some parks have gates, railings and imposing entrances. We may know these are public spaces, provided for people to use and enjoy, but that doesn't necessarily mean everyone approaching them feels that they belong there. There is an important difference between being allowed in and feeling invited in.

Natural England's research into green spaces recognises that physical access is only part of the story:

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6527150025605120>

How safe, welcoming and well cared for a place feels matters too. So do information, activities, opportunities to meet other people and simply knowing there is somebody there.

That is one of the less obvious things Birmingham's Park Rangers do. A Ranger in a park changes something. They may be leading a walk, checking the site, running a children's activity, working with volunteers or carrying out practical conservation. But sometimes their most important role begins simply with being there.

There is somebody to ask: Where does that path go? What's happening here? Can my children join in? Is this activity for me? And somebody who can answer: Yes. Come and have a look.

We have talked before about creating **Nature Hubs** – places that provide a recognisable doorway into nature, where people can find information, shelter, resources, activities and, importantly, another person. Rangers can provide that doorway too. Their presence says that this place is being cared for. Their activities give people a reason to cross the threshold. Returning regularly allows relationships and familiarity to grow.

A park doesn't have to belong to us personally for us to feel that there is a place for us within it. Perhaps making a City of Nature isn't only about providing more green space or improving what is already there.

Sometimes it is about opening the metaphorical door, standing on the other side and saying: "Hello. Come in. What would you like to know?"

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/out-and-about-with-birmingham-park-rangers/>



Meet the Alliance: Thrive Birmingham

Tucked away in King's Heath Park is a garden that demonstrates beautifully what can happen when we think about people and nature together. Thrive Birmingham uses social and therapeutic horticulture – gardening supported by trained practitioners – to improve physical and psychological health, communication, confidence and skills.

Its Birmingham programmes support adults, young people and children with a range of needs. Some people come to improve their physical health or independence; others are living with anxiety, depression, illness, injury or isolation. Gardening provides purposeful activity, opportunities to meet others and, importantly, time spent connecting with nature.

Leading the Birmingham centre is Sam King Gamblin, whose background in higher education included supporting disabled students, accessibility and student mental health. That combination of experience feels particularly at home at Thrive, where inclusion, wellbeing and our relationship with the natural world come together.

Over the last year, that nature connection has become visible in new ways. The historic former television gardens at King's Heath Park have been restored and developed into a more accessible, welcoming space, with improved paths and signage, a sheltered workspace and additional wildlife habitat. Public garden tours now invite people to explore the gardens and discover how they have changed.

Thrive has also been widening the ways people can connect with the natural world through workshops combining nature with art, sensory awareness, movement, native plants and even composting. Its therapeutic programmes continue at the heart of the garden, while projects are taking that approach out into other Birmingham communities.

Sam and the team are also helping to demonstrate how therapeutic horticulture can work in different settings, including a nature-based wellbeing programme with the University of Birmingham.

And Thrive doesn't only deliver the work – it helps others learn how to do it. Its training helps knowledge and practice travel much further than one garden. Perhaps that is what Thrive brings to our City of Nature harvest: a living demonstration that a garden can be habitat, classroom, therapeutic space, community resource and a place to belong – all at the same time.

And the garden itself keeps growing.

<https://www.thrive.org.uk/how-we-help/regional-centres-and-programmes/birmingham>



Out and About in October with the City's Park Rangers

Get Active in Aston, Newtown & Nechells Parks!

A fun programme of activities is being delivered by the Council's Park Rangers to help improve your health and wellbeing, as well as caring for your parks and open spaces.

Activities support volunteering, deliver nature-based health interventions to improve physical activity levels and mental health.

Come along, get stuck in, and help make our parks better for both people and wildlife

- No experience needed – just enthusiasm!
- Wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.
- **Check for cancellation in bad weather.**

For more information please email Lickey.hub@birmingham.gov.uk

Follow Birmingham Parks and Green Space, Birmingham Open Spaces Online or Naturally Birmingham on social media to keep up to date with what's happening this month.

Check out your park's notice board.

Or visit the Naturally Birmingham Website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/out-and-about-with-birminghams-park-rangers/> to see all the dates for Ranger led activities in Aston, Newtown & Nechells Parks



Get Involved in October with the City of Nature Alliance

The City of Nature Alliance brings together a wide range of organisations, groups, and individuals who care about Birmingham's green and blue spaces and every month is full of opportunities to get involved.

Across the city this month you'll find activities you can join including:

- Birmingham Open Spaces Forum - Birmingham Friends of Open Spaces Groups volunteer days - Various and BOSF events: <https://bosf.org.uk/bosf-events/>
- Activities at Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens - <https://www.castlebromwichhallgardens.org.uk/events-calendar/>
- Ecobirmingham - <https://ecobirmingham.com/events/>
- Thrive - <https://www.thrive.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer>
- The Field Studies Council - <https://www.field-studies-council.org/courses-and-experiences/>
- The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust - <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/events>
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens - <https://birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/whats-on/>
- The Active Wellbeing Society - <https://theaws.co.uk/activity-and-support/>
- Birmingham Settlement - <https://www.birminghamsettlement.org.uk/>



From wildlife watching and volunteering to walks, workshops, and community events, there's something for all ages and interests. Events and activities are regularly updated, so please check all social media channels for the latest information and joining instructions.

There's always something happening and everyone is welcome.



Meet the Alliance: Birmingham TreePeople

Planting a tree is a hopeful act. But Birmingham TreePeople reminds us that planting is only the beginning.

Established from Birmingham's Tree Warden network in 2016, Birmingham TreePeople has grown from a volunteer-led organisation into a charity working with communities, land managers and Birmingham City Council to plant, understand and care for the city's urban forest.

And care is important.

New trees need watering, mulching, surveying, pruning and looking after for years if they are going to establish successfully. Existing mature trees need care too – because protecting the canopy we already have is every bit as important as planting for the future.

Over the last year that long-term approach has continued to grow. Through its Reaching Communities programme, Birmingham TreePeople has planted hundreds of trees in areas with lower canopy cover, trained people of all ages and created Tree Trails that help communities explore and understand the trees around them.

Its volunteers are also gathering information. More than 3,000 newly planted street trees have now been surveyed, helping build knowledge about which trees are thriving, where they need additional care and what we can learn for future planting.

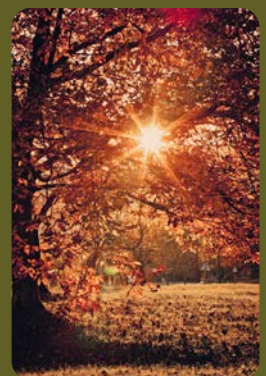
There is learning at every level. Birmingham TreePeople runs a community tree nursery at King's Heath Park, offers volunteer training and is an accredited provider of Level 2 Arboriculture training – creating routes for people to turn an interest in trees into practical skills and potentially a career.

It has even been mapping Birmingham's publicly accessible orchards, helping us understand not only where our fruit trees are, but questions of orchard equity – who has access to them and where the gaps remain.

Perhaps that is Birmingham TreePeople's contribution to our City of Nature harvest:

plant the tree, certainly – but then gather the knowledge, grow the skills and relationships, and keep caring for it long enough to see a canopy grow. That's how planting trees becomes growing an urban forest.

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



Wildlife Watching in October – Seeds, Nuts and Berries

By October, autumn is no longer quietly announcing its arrival. It is everywhere. And one of the best places to see it is in the extraordinary harvest of seeds, nuts and berries appearing across our parks, gardens, hedgerows and woodlands. Look beneath an oak and you may find acorns scattered across the ground.



Hazelnuts are ripening, beech trees produce their distinctive triangular nuts and horse chestnuts release shiny conkers from their spiky cases.

But don't just look at what has fallen. Watch what happens next. Jays are particularly worth watching at this time of year. They collect acorns and bury them in the ground as food stores for later. Inevitably, some are forgotten. Those forgotten acorns have the opportunity to germinate – making jays accidental tree planters.



Squirrels and small mammals are busy gathering and storing food too. Along hedgerows, the autumn larder continues. Hawthorn haws, rosehips, rowan berries, sloes and other fruits provide food for birds and mammals. Later in autumn and into winter, visiting thrushes such as redwings and fieldfares will join our resident birds in searching for berries.



And every berry contains another story.

Plants cannot walk to somewhere new, but their seeds can travel. Some hitch a lift on fur or clothing. Some are carried by the wind. Others are eaten by animals and deposited somewhere completely different.

So autumn isn't simply about things dying back. It is also a season of movement and preparation.

Look closely at the plants themselves. Sycamore keys helicopter away from their parent trees. Burdock seeds cling tenaciously to passing animals. Teasels and thistles hold seeds that will attract feeding birds, including goldfinches.



And while you're looking for seeds, keep watching everything else. Fungi continue to appear after damp weather, spiders remain conspicuous and fallen leaves reveal creatures that were hidden during summer.

October gives us another opportunity to contribute to the Woodland Trust's Nature's Calendar too. When did the first ripe conkers appear? When did acorns begin falling? When did a familiar tree become fully tinted – or lose its leaves? Choose somewhere familiar and keep watching.

<https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>



Stop, look, record, share.

Because this month's harvest isn't simply the end of this year's growing season. Some of it is already becoming next year's beginning.

The Garden in October - Gathering the Harvest

Across gardens and allotments, pumpkins and squashes are ready to harvest, apples and pears continue to ripen and the last beans, tomatoes and other summer crops are being brought in. Nuts, seeds and berries are ripening too – although many of those belong to the wildlife sharing our gardens.

But a harvest creates another question: what do we do with what we have grown?

According to seasonal guidance from the Royal Horticultural Society, October is a good time for:

🎃 Harvesting pumpkins and squashes, allowing their skins to harden so that suitable varieties can be stored for the months ahead.

🍏 Gathering apples and pears and checking stored fruit regularly, removing anything beginning to rot before it affects the rest.

🌱 Planting trees, shrubs and perennials. Cooler temperatures and moist soil make autumn an excellent time for plants to begin establishing roots before next year's growing season.

🌷 Planting spring-flowering bulbs, including daffodils, crocuses and alliums. Tulips are usually better left until November.

🍂 Collecting seeds from favourite garden plants, making sure they are dry before labelling and storing them somewhere cool and dry.

🍃 Making leaf mould. Fallen leaves can be gathered into a simple container or bag and allowed to break down into a valuable soil improver.

And once again, don't be too tidy.

Leave seed heads where birds can feed from them. Allow some hollow stems to remain for overwintering insects. Gather leaves from paths and lawns where necessary, but consider moving them beneath hedges or into quieter corners rather than treating them as waste. A pile of leaves is not an untidy garden to a hedgehog.

October is also a wonderful time to think about sharing the harvest. Spare apples, seeds, plants and produce can be swapped with neighbours, shared through community projects or preserved for later. Seeds can be saved. Leaves can become compost. Vegetable beds can be protected and replenished.

Gardening teaches us that harvest is not simply about taking.

It is about gathering, sharing, storing, learning and returning something to the soil.

And even as this year's garden begins to quieten, gardeners are already planting bulbs, trees and seeds with another season in mind.

Perhaps that's the real rhythm of a garden: every harvest contains the beginnings of what comes next.

No garden? Birmingham's parks, allotments, community gardens and public gardens offer plenty of opportunities to enjoy the season and get involved. Contact Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk to find out more.



Young Green Champions: International Walk to School Month



Birmingham's youngest nature heroes are
stepping up —
and they're bringing big ideas
in small wellies!



How much do you notice on the way to school? Perhaps there's a tree you pass every morning. A patch of grass where mushrooms appear after rain. Conkers beneath a horse chestnut. Birds gathering on rooftops. A spider's web on a railing.

When we travel somewhere every day, it can become so familiar that we stop really looking. Walk to School Month is a great excuse to start noticing again.

Walking, wheeling, cycling or scooting for all or part of the school journey can help us be more active, reduce traffic around school gates and give us a chance to experience our neighbourhood differently.

So here's an October challenge for our Young Green Champions.

On your journey to school, can you spot:

-  Five different coloured leaves
-  Three different seeds, nuts or berries
-  A spider's web
-  Three different kinds of bird
-  The biggest tree on your route
-  A fungus – but look, don't touch or pick
-  Something still flowering
-  Something that has changed because of the weather

And here's the important bit: keep looking at the same places. Choose one tree, hedge, garden or patch of green that you pass regularly. What does it look like today? Are there more leaves on the ground next week? Have the berries disappeared? Have fungi appeared after rain?

You are beginning to do something scientists do: observe change over time. You could draw what you see, photograph it, write down the date or tell somebody else what you noticed. And if walking the whole way to school isn't possible, that's fine. Your nature-watching journey might begin from the bus stop, the car park or simply at the school gate.

Being a Young Green Champion isn't about travelling in one particular way. It's about being curious about the world around you and discovering how your everyday choices connect with nature. Same journey. Different day. What has changed?

One Planet - Looking at Wildlife Around the World in October

Our October wildlife watching may be focused on Birmingham's autumn harvest, but across the planet other animals are responding to their own changing seasons, habitats and challenges.

 World Animal Day – 4 October

World Animal Day is an opportunity to think about our relationship with animals everywhere – domestic, farmed and wild – and how human choices affect their lives. It has been celebrated on 4 October since the date is also associated with St Francis of Assisi, traditionally regarded as the patron saint of animals.

 World Migratory Bird Day – 10 October

Migration makes the idea of One Planet wonderfully literal. Birds cross countries, continents and oceans without recognising the boundaries on our maps.

The 2026 theme is “Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!”, celebrating the contribution ordinary people make by recording the birds they see. Those observations help scientists understand migration, population changes and threats to wildlife.

And some of those global journeys end here. Birds arriving in Britain for winter connect our Birmingham parks and gardens with habitats far beyond the city.

 International Day of the Snow Leopard – 23 October

High in the mountains of Central and South Asia lives one of the world's most elusive big cats. Snow leopards occur across 12 countries and face pressures including habitat fragmentation, declining prey, illegal hunting and climate change. The UN designated 23 October as the International Day of the Snow Leopard to strengthen international cooperation to protect them and their mountain ecosystems.

 World Lemur Day – 30 October

Finally we travel to Madagascar. Lemurs occur naturally only on Madagascar and the nearby Comoros Islands, making their future inseparable from the future of those ecosystems. World Lemur Day falls on 30 October in 2026, with the World Lemur Festival running throughout the month.

There is no separate nature somewhere else. From Birmingham's migrating birds to Madagascar's lemurs and Asia's mountain wildlife, we are all sharing one living planet.

 International Day of Climate Action – 24 October

This reminds us that protecting wildlife ultimately means protecting the conditions that allow life to flourish. Climate change affects habitats, food supplies, migration, breeding seasons and the ability of species to adapt to rapidly changing environments. But climate action isn't only something that happens at international conferences. Restoring habitats, planting and caring for trees, creating greener neighbourhoods, reducing waste, travelling differently and helping nature recover are all part of the same response. From individual choices to community action and global agreements, every scale matters. One planet means one shared climate – and all of us have a part in caring for it.



Earth Stories – Memories, Hopes and Happenings

Autumn has properly arrived now. Not just according to the calendar, but in that unmistakable way when you look outside one morning and realise the world has changed colour.

I have been noticing rowan leaves. We spend so much time admiring their berries that perhaps we overlook the leaves, but now they are turning through yellows, oranges and reds, sometimes all on the same tree. I find myself picking particularly beautiful ones up, despite having absolutely no sensible need for another leaf. Some things apparently just need to come home with you.

And then there are the spiders. At this time of year they seem to be everywhere, although of course many of them were there all along. October simply makes their work visible. A misty morning or a little dew suddenly reveals an extraordinary web stretched between plants, across a gate or, occasionally, exactly where I was about to walk. I admire the engineering enormously. I am slightly less appreciative when I discover it with my face.

October encourages a little magic. Perhaps that is partly why pumpkins fit the month so perfectly. They are harvest and Halloween at the same time: food, decoration, tradition and ridiculous orange abundance. I know their production and disposal can be a concern - you could try growing your own next year for soup and pies as well.

And October has another pleasure: a hot drink outside when it is actually cold enough to need one. A travel mug of pumpkin-spiced coffee – or sometimes hot chocolate – beside a lake is one of those small luxuries that feels disproportionately wonderful. Hands wrapped around something warm, the landscape reflected in the water and that smell of damp leaves and autumn in the air. Sometimes happiness really isn't complicated.

Then there is the October sky. This month's full moon is traditionally known as the Hunter's Moon. I like these old moon names. They remind us how closely people's calendars were once connected to what was happening on the land. Before electric lights, a bright autumn moon really mattered.

Perhaps that is part of October's appeal. It is a month when the boundaries between things seem less definite. Day slips into darkness earlier. Mist softens familiar landscapes. Fungi appear almost overnight. Spider webs become visible and then disappear again. Leaves that have spent months quietly doing the work of keeping trees alive suddenly become the stars of the show.

And, beneath all that apparent decline, seeds and nuts are being gathered, buried, carried and stored. Bulbs are waiting underground. Trees are preparing for winter. Life hasn't stopped. It is simply changing what it is doing. Maybe we could learn something from that. After a busy summer, perhaps October gives us permission to gather things in too. To look at what grew, enjoy some of the harvest, store what we need, share what we can and decide what is worth carrying forward.

Preferably while sitting beside a lake with a hot chocolate.

Best wishes

Deborah Needle – Editor



Birmingham City Council's Route to Net Zero

Nature recovery and climate action are part of the same story. Birmingham's journey towards Net Zero is another part of building a greener, healthier and more resilient city.

Net zero is the idea of reducing our emissions down to zero or as close as possible to prevent further temperature increases.

To find out more about BCC's Net Zero journey visit BCC website:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50282/climate_change/2641/what_is_climate_change_and_net_zero/4

To keep up to date you can receive the BCC **Greener Birmingham Bulletin** by email go to :

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20179/news_and_media/201/sign_up_for_regular_email_updates_from_birmingham_city_council#:~:text=Subscribe%20to%20the%20Birmingham%20Bulletin,on%20a%20range%20of%20topics



Scroll down and select the “**Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero**” option.



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