

**May  
2020**



**The Bridge Garden  
Newsletter No 37**

## **Planting and sowing time.....**

We are getting very close to the peak seed sowing and planting time in the growing calendar as we look to fill up our growing beds in readiness for the peak growing time through the summer and into autumn.....

## **Lots of colour in the garden.....**

Both the entrance to school and the adjacent areas to the garden are full of colour as the flowers that were either sown last year and have self - seeded or the perennial flowers that we have growing are all producing lots of colour.....

We have lots of orange and yellow courtesy of the pot marigolds – calendula plus there are areas where there are lots of blue with borage, nepeta, forget-me-nots and cornflowers all in flower. All of these colourful flowers both add some much needed cheer plus they are a magnet for the oh so important pollinators.....





## **VE Day – Friday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020.....**

Despite the issues surrounding the global pandemic which sadly took away many of the planned celebrations for this momentous day, there are still plenty of poignant reminders of the many sacrifices that military personnel undertook during wartime to create the world that we now live in. One of the best and most striking reminders is the red poppy [*papaver rhoeas*] which is a stark reminder of the sacrifices and a memorial to all those who fell during wartime. Poppies grow naturally in disturbed earth all over Europe, indeed poppies will often pop up in the most unexpected places with the tiny grain like seeds being dispersed very easily. How appropriate that on this special day we have lots of red poppies in flower in our school garden.....

Below you can see some of the poppies that are flowering in our garden.....



# **VE Day – May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020**



## A sharp reminder.....

Although we have experienced some gorgeous days of sunshine all the way through April and into May, still some nights we get a sharp reminder that it is still too early to plant out tender crops such as courgettes, squash and pumpkins, indeed with the relatively warm dry April and early May period we have been almost fooled into thinking that we are further into the growing season than what we actually are. See below for the images of frost and ice – May 12<sup>th</sup>.....



On the left you can see where a sheet that we have covering some growing boxes has collected some water and on the same night that we had frost, this water has actually frozen giving you some idea about how cold it goes at night still.....

## Frost and Ice

It is still too cold to plant out tender crops – keep patient, nature will catch up. Better be safe than sorry!!



## **Grape vine is flourishing.....**

The grape vine that we growing in the poly tunnel has certainly enjoyed the sunshine over the last few weeks, with the added protection of the poly tunnel plus lots of watering, this vine is really making lots of growth.....  
Below you can see the growth the vine has made.....



**Strawberries look good too.....**





## Potatoes are making great progress.....

Here you can see that our Jazzy seed potatoes have made plenty of growth, we have had to be careful with the frost that has been around this week but hopefully any growing shoots that have been damaged by frost will recover and will continue their growth to provide us with a crop of potatoes.....  
Below you can see the growth that these potatoes have made.....





## **Erigeron karvinskianus are spreading quickly.....**

The Erigeron daisies that we planted last year have spread very quickly as you can see from the photograph below creating some super ground cover.....



## **Growing bed preparation.....**

Some of the crops that we want to grow are “hungry” crops that require lots of water and plenty of organic matter to feed on so we are spending some time adding plenty of organic matter into our growing beds before planting time.....





## Poly tunnel strawberries.....

Below you can see the start of the harvest of the strawberries that are growing in the poly tunnel – coupled with the heat and lots of water you can see that the plants are producing lots of fresh juicy berries.....





## **Broad bean harvest has begun too.....**

Just like the strawberries, we have just started to harvest our crop of broad beans, now this really is a bumper crop which we have been harvesting for about three weeks now – after the students sowed these seeds way back in the autumn, they have been growing all through the autumn, through winter and now into late spring when we have started to pick this crop – the fresh smell when they are first picked just makes you realise what fresh crops smell like – no plastic packaging, no chemicals sprayed on the plants, just a fresh healthy smell generated by water and a bit of warmth. Below you can see some of the broad bean crop.....



# **Super fresh.....**

# **Broad Beans.....**



**Fresh radishes picked too.....**



**Here you can see an old water butt that is full of mixed salad leaves and red kitten spinach..  
Top quality fresh crops.....**

**Leaves are looking good..**





## Lots of seed sowing is taking place.....

Now that we are getting some warmer weather, it is the perfect time to sow lots of seeds – we have sown swede, carrots, round podded peas, green calabrese and black salsify.....We always like to sow something a little bit different so the black salsify is an interesting one – basically it is a root crop, black on the outside and white inside – indeed some of the roots can be a foot long.....

Below you can see the seed packet and the unusual looking seeds.....



Subway continue to support our schools growing work



# Schools growing work



## **Super alliums.....**

Alliums are super flowering plants – all part of the same family as onions, garlic and shallots. Provide some super colour usually purple although there are white, yellow and blue varieties. Long lasting flowers that require nominal care.....





## Californian poppies providing some stunning colour...

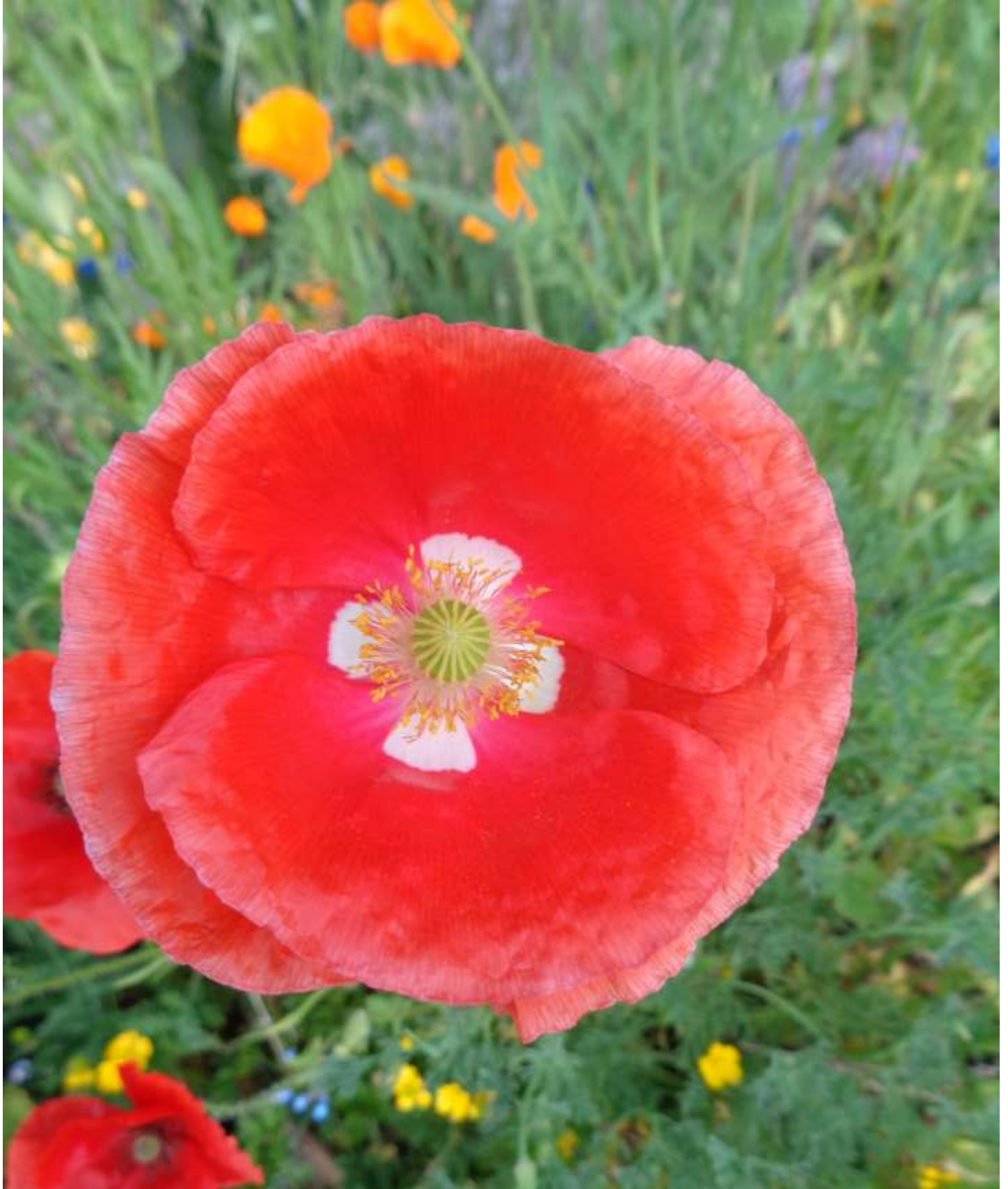
As well as the more traditional red poppies, there are also Californian poppies that are usually orange and yellow, indeed some are a mixture of the two colours, either way they look stunning particularly in the sunshine. Also, they self - seed like the traditional red poppies.....  
Below you can see some of these Californian poppies in full colour.....





## Victoria Cross Poppies.....

Below you can see one of many of the especially bred Victoria Cross poppies that are growing in our garden areas – the distinctive cross is a flower that has been especially bred to both remember and to support the soldiers who lost their lives in war times plus a contribution from the Victoria Cross poppy seed sales goes to the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Amazing to think that a tiny speck which is a poppy seed can produce something so stunning.....





## **Garden clearance work.....**

The whole big Bridge Garden space is a big, big space which is under continued development – when time allows and weather conditions also allow, we are always looking to maximise the space that we have. The bottom area of The Bridge Garden which is effectively the original part of the garden has a landscape that is not the easiest area to work because of the sloping nature of the ground, but having said this, we do have some plans to further develop this area..... Initially we need to clear the grass that when left can very quickly take over, this is something that we are currently working on. Also, in this area we have a number of raised growing beds that we will need to weed in readiness to be able to sow and plant up accordingly. Then there is an area that slopes which we are planning to rotavate and then sow with some wildflowers and perennial flowers..





## **Lots of stunning colour.....**

The frontage area and the pathway adjacent to The Bridge Garden really has some stunning colour which is highlighted even more in the gorgeous sunshine that we have been experiencing all through April and now into May as well.....

The mix of calendula, borage, cornflowers, nepeta, traditional red poppies, plus many other different varieties of poppies plus the rich colours of the Californian poppies all makes for a fantastic display of colour that is proving a real magnet for the many pollinators that visit our garden areas.....



**Stunning!!**

**So much colour**



## Busy bees.....

Here you can see one of many bees that are enjoying the colourful flowers that we have in our garden areas.....





## **Lavender area is full of flowers.....**

**Another area of our garden that was planted with lavender late last year has now established itself with loads of flowers on the plants – again, when these flowers open this will be a magnet for the bees.....**





## Onions have been harvested.....

Following on from the extremely wet autumn and winter that we experienced, we actually planted some tri-colour onions inside the poly tunnel because the outdoor beds were waterlogged, they have grown to a reasonable size, certainly usable so we have lifted them this week so we can make better use of the indoor poly tunnel space for tomato plants and cucumber plants that we have ready to plant up in the poly tunnel. Below you can see this early harvest of onions.....





## More Broad Beans.....

The broad beans that were sown back in the autumn have produced a super crop which has been harvested, indeed this crop could have been much bigger if the weather had been a bit more favourable – with April being on record as being the driest ever, May is almost going the same way. This has led to some very, very dry growing conditions but we have managed to harvest a decent crop.....



## Stunning colours.....





## Amazing detail.....

It never ceases to amaze me that a tiny seed can produce a plant which usually produces a flower – indeed a poppy seed as we have commented before is really a tiny, almost speck of dust, so to see the detail that a poppy flower produces really is a feat of natural science. Below you can see some examples of this.....





## Cucumbers are establishing themselves.....

The cucumber plants that we have grown from seed are establishing themselves so hopefully they will start to make lots of growth which in turn will provide us with a crop of super fresh and tasty cucumbers.....

Below you can see these cucumber plants.....





**Salad leaves are really growing fast now.....**





## **Lupins are stunning too.....**

**In our cottage garden – perennial garden area we have lots of stunning plants and trees that will all produce their own special colours at various stages of the summer. Below you can see the stunning colours that our lupins are producing....**

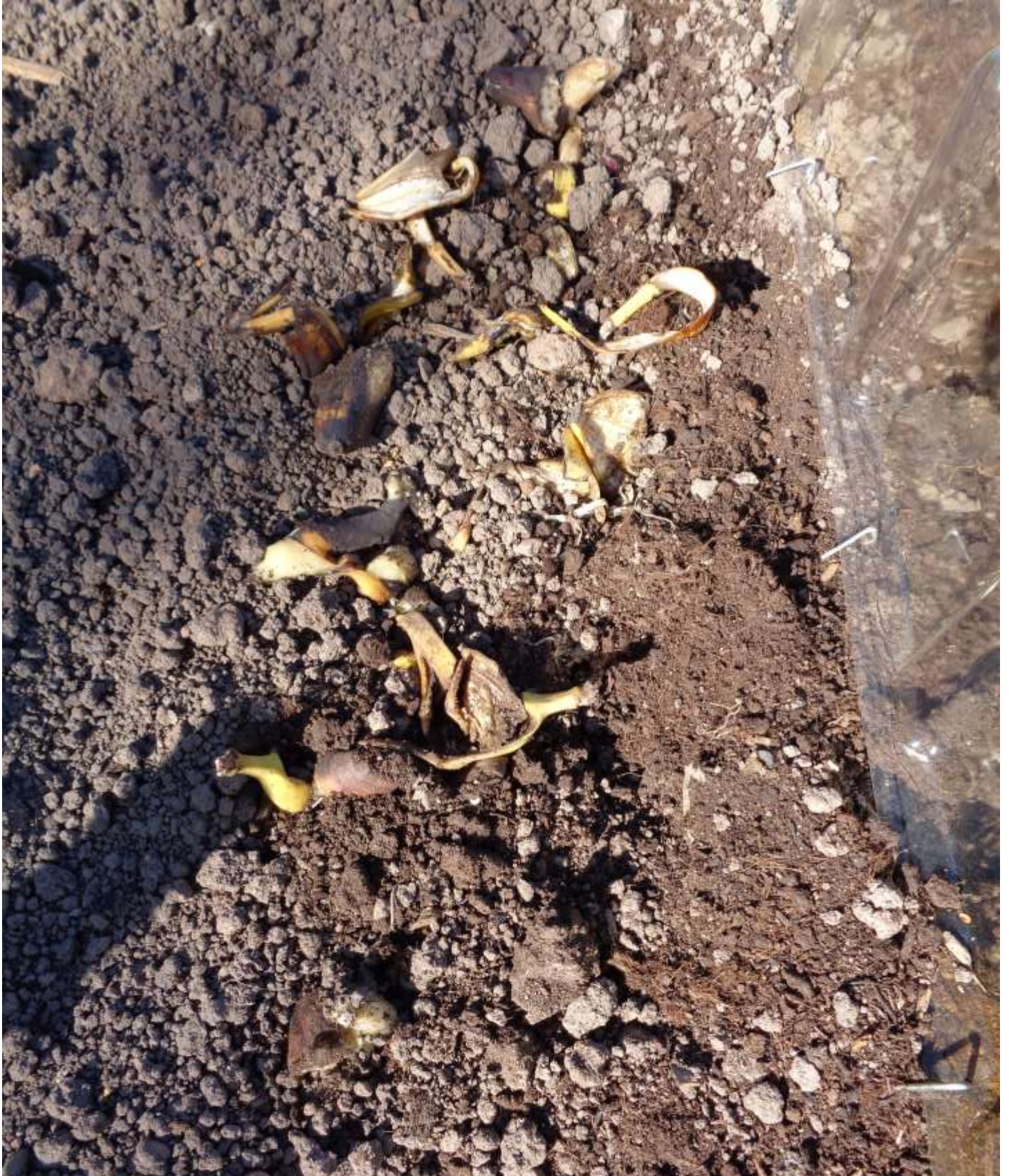




## Outdoor Planting time is now! .....

Now is the perfect time to start planting out courgettes, pumpkins and squash, the fear of frost has hopefully passed us by now, so these tender leaf crops will love the sunshine provided we keep them well watered.....

The pumpkin growing area has been prepared with plenty of rich organic matter plus we keep adding different bits of organic matter, there is nothing easier than adding banana skins that are full of potassium. Below you can see this area.....





## Plenty of Nettles.....



Along with many culinary and medicinal uses that nettles have, plus the habitat that they provide for butterflies, nettles can also be used to make fertiliser.....

## Blackcurrant sage is another stunning herb.....



Blackcurrant sage is another herb that we have growing in our second herb garden area – yet another favourite of the bees with its purple flowers plus the leaves really do have a strong sweet smell of blackcurrant.....

## Blackcurrant sage.....

## Another bee favourite