

## Garthdee Field Allotments – Birds, Bees & Tree Surveys

### Tree Survey

Within the southern wall of Garthdee Field runs a planted line of sycamore and common lime. At the east end and as far as the entrance, lime and sycamore alternate approximately 6m apart, with lime located either side of the main vehicle entrance. The tree line is broken at the west end, three trees not being replaced after removal; and the regular alternation of lime and sycamore is not repeated.

Measurements of girth at 1m height above ground level show the following patterns:

Tree	Number	Minimum girth (m)	Maximum girth (m)	Average girth (m)
Lime	10	1.75	2.68	2.20
Lime (semi-mature)	1	-	-	0.94
Sycamore	9	1.99	2.95	2.49

The condition of trees is good, with no major branch breakages in recent years and limited (but regular) falls of small branches in high winds. Limes show the habit of shoots from the base (typical of common lime), and these have been pruned every 2 years. The single semi-mature lime also shows this habit, although its bark is markedly darker and more shiny at present than those of the larger lime trees.

The remaining trees on common ground of Garthdee Field Allotments show signs of self-seeding, as they occur at irregular intervals and are less often as vertical as those at the southern wall. They are located as follows:

Tree	Number	Minimum girth (m)	Maximum girth (m)	Average girth (m)	Comments
Sycamore (East wall)	1	-	-	0.68	
Sycamore (North Car Park)	13	0.52 (5 Saplings excluded)	2.21	1.11	Many multiple stems (pruned / coppiced) and several penetrating the fence mesh
Alder? (North Car Park)	1	-	-	1.5	2 stem
Holly (North Car Park)	1	-	-	-	

Condition of the North Bank sycamores varies, with significant bark damage where the branches have penetrated fence mesh.

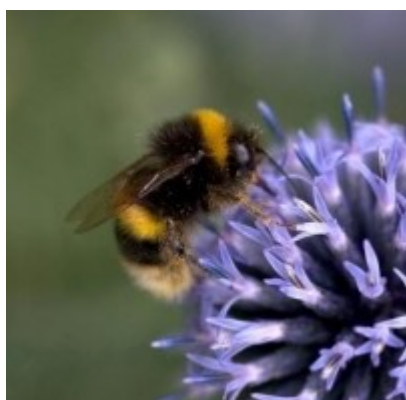
#### Action proposed

1. Southern Wall – none required
2. North Car Park slope – (i) remove self-seeded saplings (ii) remove penetrating stems from fence mesh (iii) remove other stems to limit sycamore cover of North Bank.

## **Bird Survey**

If you had to name a regular bird visitor to a plot, robins come first to mind; or pigeons (if you are noticing nibbled brassicas). Nesting visitors may vary, sometimes dependent on the level of activity on a plot; nesters noticed in the last two years include blue tits (nesting box) and wrens (kettle). So GFAA has installed a further 6 bird boxes around the site, to encourage further nesting, and we'll be able to report on their use next summer.

To encourage more visits to the site, we've introduced bird feeders in the orchard and elsewhere (currently mobile)(maintained by volunteer Gordon Mitchell). Previously, plotters have reported a considerable variety of feeding visitors, from tits (coal, blue, long-tailed) to finch (chaffinch and bullfinch), though we no longer have a resident flock of pigeons (the pigeon-master having moved from the bungalow bordering the south car park). Similarly, there have been no recent signs of a perch for our sparrow-hawk to defeather its catch – perhaps we were all too busy at the plots.



White Tailed Bumblebee

## **Bee Survey**

There are 24 species of bumblebees, around 225 species of solitary **bee** and just a single honeybee species in the UK. Bumblebees look quite different from honeybees and solitary **bees**. The most reliable difference is that bumblebees are usually larger, and are always covered with dense hair.

Solitary bees are more active in early summer than bumble bees and honey bees, and can be seen on runs to and from nests (some in insect hotels). They are smaller than bumble bees, and so a little more tricky to identify the type, but are more active in early-season pollination of fruit bushes and trees.

On Garthdee Field, we have both ginger haired bumblebees and white tailed bumblebees. On the latter, the white tail is easier to recognise than the other banded colours (black and yellow) which distinguish the different types. Individual plotters have bee-friendly plants in their plots and alongside access roads – hosta, borage, and comfrey all provide bee-friendly feed for a considerable period. No red tailed bumble bees have been reported this year on Garthdee Field.



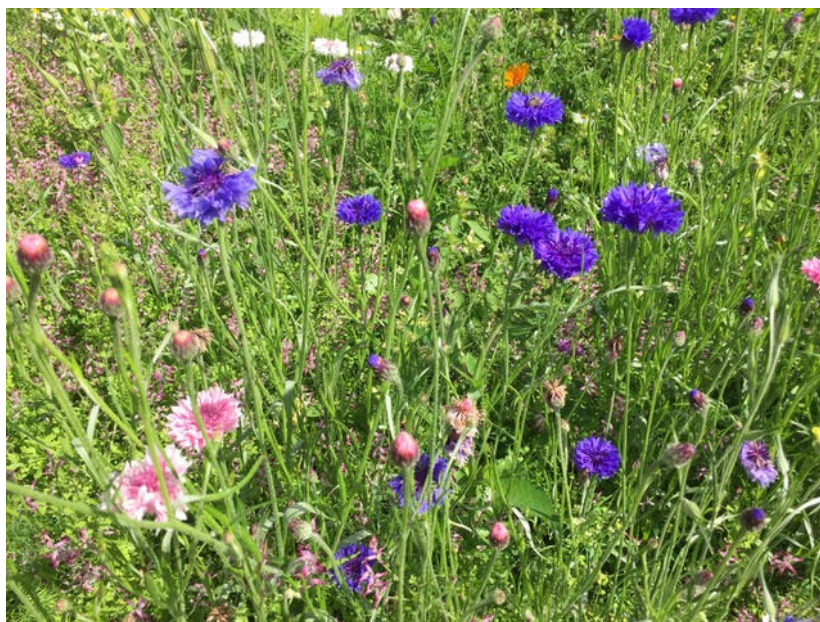
Bombus Humilis – Ginger Haired Bumblebee

On my plot, honey bees appear to visit areas of flower as a group – for example, on comfrey which had been the gathering place for bumble bees on the previous day – and less frequently in general than bumble bees.



Honey Bee

To further attract bees, the wildflower meadow was weeded and re-sown this year, and is now in full flower. Our thanks to all who participated in this back-breaking work, particularly the Apple Team and groups of Community Sunday volunteers



For more information on recording bee types and activities, see the [Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society's](#) website.