

# Tale from the Garden

Daily Express gardening expert Alan Titchmarsh has joined a crop of celebrities urging the nation to plant one billion “seeds of hope”. With TV naturalist Chris Packham & Gardeners’ World presenter Rachel de Thame, he is backing the #BillionSeedChallenge, which seeks to get everyone involved in planting wild flowers over the next few weeks. It is expected to be the biggest seed planting exercise in British history. The challenge continues this month & next in the run-up to the crunch COP26 climate summit in Glasgow which starts on November 1<sup>st</sup>. On October 30<sup>th</sup>, as world leaders head to Scotland, a UK-wide “Plant-a-Long” is planned.

Garden Store Homebase is backing the crusade by offering 50% off all seeds in store between September 24<sup>th</sup> & October 26<sup>th</sup>. The project – run by the Together coalition & also involving the Scouts, the Eden project, the Royal Voluntary Service & Rotary – aims to help wildlife thrive & make our homes, towns & cities more beautiful. It urges all of us to plant wildflowers in pots, window boxes or gardens. Another option is to take part in a group planting in a local green space – perhaps an idea for us in our Church garden?

And here are some tips to get you started:

- ✓ Plant your seeds in pots, window boxes or your garden – or join in an organised planting in a local green space. But please do not plant in the wider countryside or in already ‘wild’ areas.
- ✓ Look out for bee-friendly icons on your seed packet to help our native bees & other insect pollinators.
- ✓ Use peat-free compost. Peat bogs are wildlife habitats & help tackle climate change by storing carbon.
- ✓ Buy British seeds if it is possible.
- ✓ To grow on lawns, use wildflower meadow seeds planted on a bare patch.



Seeds that are sown in the autumn (August – October) often germinate quicker, although this does not always show until the following spring. Autumn sown wildflower meadows tend to flower earlier in the spring, as they require the winter ground frost to kick start their germination. By sowing the seeds around this time, it allows for the upcoming winter frost to come along, which in turn will help to break the dormancy of the newly sown seeds. By doing so, this then allows a higher percentage of moisture to be absorbed by the seed, creating the ideal growing conditions for the seed to germinate. Another benefit of sowing the seeds in the autumn is that the risk of bird damage is greatly reduced, as there is often an increase in available food sources for the birds within the autumn months.

Autumn sowing favours such plants as Wild Red Poppy and Cornfield seeds including Autumn Hawkbit, Common Toadflax, Yarrow, Wild White Clover & Devils Bit Scabious.

I like the common name for the Devils Bit Scabious - 'bobby bright buttons', so this week, this is my choice for special attention!

Devil's-bit scabious - Scientific name: *Succisa pratensis*

The rounded and nodding, lilac-blue flower heads of Devil's-bit scabious can be found in damp meadows and marshes, and along woodland rides and riverbanks. Although still widespread, it has declined in parts of England nearly to the point of becoming threatened.

Devil's-bit Scabious is one of our few wildflowers that provides a splash of true-blue in our countryside. It's a clump-forming perennial, growing slowly and spreading into sizeable patches of broad, lance-shaped leaves. These arise in pairs and are dark bluish-green, often marked with purple blotches and with contrasting pale midribs. The flower stems arise in late summer, branching several times to produce clouds

of flowers above the foliage. These are best described as perfect little pincushions, tight domes of tiny flowers with their little stigmas sticking out. Opening from July until October, they provide a valuable late source of nectar and pollen and are beloved by bees and butterflies. For the garden, 'Alba' is white-flowered, 'Derby Purple' is a more compact form with bluish-purple flowers and "Peddar's Pink" has pale pink flowers.



Did you know?

- Devil's-bit scabious, a member of the Teasel family, gets its Latin name - 'Scabere', meaning to scratch - from its traditional use as a treatment for skin conditions, such as scabies and the sores of bubonic plague.
- Its common name arises from the fact that its roots look truncated, as if bitten off, legend has it, by the Devil. According to one legend the name is derived from the plants' short, stubby roots - the Devil grew angry about the plants medicinal properties and so bit the roots off!

The challenge to plant a billion seeds together makes me think of the challenge we all have to plant 'Seeds for Holiness'.

Just as farmers must prepare their fields for the seed they want to plant to get a harvest, Christians must plant the seed of God's Word in their hearts so they may reap a harvest of holiness in their lives.

This weekend, as we celebrate our Harvest Festival, we are reminded that the Fall time of the year is, for many farmers, a time to plant seeds for a future harvest. A farmer prepares his fields, fertilizes, and cultivates. He spends long hours planning and working as well as pondering on the hazards and benefits of being a farmer. He works hard knowing full well the result of the harvest is dependent on forces outside himself. Everyone knows that farmers cannot cause the seeds to germinate, nor can they produce the right combination of rainfall, sunshine, and temperature needed to bring the harvest in. Farmers are dependent on God. That is a fact which cannot be changed.

However, diligent farmers know they must do their part if they are going to enjoy a harvest good enough to pay the bills and feed those in this world. In a sense, farmers are in a partnership with God, receiving the benefits only after fulfilling their responsibility.

Deuteronomy 28 holds blessings for the people in a nation that Biblically fears the Lord as well as curses for those who wilfully live as they please. "The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The LORD will establish you as His holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you.... The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.... However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you." (Deuteronomy 28:8-10, 12, 15)

There is a Biblical truth that must be grasped - Holiness is a joint venture with God. No one can enjoy the benefits of living a holy life without the enabling of God, nor without fulfilling their responsibilities. Just as diligent farmers prepare for a future harvest, Christians must prepare Biblically for the harvest that is promised in having Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord.

Just as farmers must break the hard ground to plant seeds for the harvest, the Holy Spirit must break the spiritual heart with the written Word of God, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)

It takes research, hard work and obedience to the law of nature for farmers to reap a harvest. Farmers must learn from others who know about farming. We must learn from those whom the Lord has established a life of holiness if we are going to enjoy the harvest that is promised in pursuing holiness. There are Christians who are diligent, studying the laws and precepts of God's Word. There are Christians whom the Lord is doing a work in and through. May they be our example.

Just as farmers seek to learn new and better ways to plant seed, fertilize and cultivate for a harvest, we must seek to learn from God's Word, Jesus said, "...the seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11)

One of the hymns Rev Andrew has chosen for our Harvest Festival service is 'Great is thy faithfulness' & the last verse reads: 'Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!'

Plant your seeds of hope, enjoy a bright tomorrow & know that one blessing will grow into thousands, if not billions!