

Symington Wildflower Verge – October 2022 Update



Firstly to pick up (as it were) from the last update. After our call to discourage dogs from defecating on our wildflower verge, which included adding a number of associated signs along the verge, the amount of dog poo appears to have reduced, but has not been eliminated.

Thank you to those who do steer their dogs away from the verge. Whilst the verge has recently been cut and appears barren, we are still keen to minimise dog poo and urine because it over-fertilises the soil

with nitrogen and phosphorous, which encourages the growth of grass and nettles that drive out the plants and flowers we are trying to encourage.

You may have noticed in early summer that a yellow flowering plant somewhat took over much of our wildflower verge (see photo above).



This was yellow rattle (so called because the seed inside the pods rattles around), which we sowed last November.

Yellow rattle lives a semi-parasitic life by feeding off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses and is now often used to turn grassland back to meadow. By feeding off the vigorous grasses, it eventually allows more delicate, traditional species to push their way through. So, over the next few years, we expect the yellow rattle to increasingly give way to our other wildflowers.

As already mentioned, with the help of the Nectar Network (Scottish Wildlife Trust) and South Ayrshire Rangers, we recently cut the verge, collected the arisings and sowed more seeds between the village and the first gate: oxeye daisy; foxglove; welsh poppy and a general wildflower mix. We also sowed more yellow rattle after the gate because this section hasn't yet benefitted from the treatment described above. So, next spring and summer, it will be interesting to compare the development of the two sections of verge (hoping the council doesn't cut the second section as they did this summer!).

Whilst cutting the verge, our Nectar Network colleague; Lynne, noticed that the trees forming the hedgerow still had the plastic guards around the base of the trunks, which prevented the saplings being eaten by sheep and deer. Now that the trees are mature, the guards collect water, which rots the trunks. We removed the guards from about 550 trees and could indeed see some evidence of rotting trunks. But hopefully they can now dry out and have a better chance of growing to healthy trees and forming a rich hedgerow.

The plastic guards are either being used again if still intact, or recycled.

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So, we're keenly looking forward to spring in order to witness the next stage in the progression of our wildflower habitat.