



Wild Ways Well and Beautiful Bluebells

Today's Wild Ways Well task is to go for a walk in your local greenspace and find some flowers, Paying particular attention to Bluebells... Remember to follow the guidelines on Social Distancing, stay 2m apart from other people and only walk in your local area – and remember to wash your hands!

You'll **Be Active** by carefully walking outdoors (observing social distancing) keeping your mind busy and occupying your time looking for the amazing array of flowers and plants that are springing up in our greenspaces. You can find a lot of these in streets or gardens but a short walk will open up many more possibilities.

We can **Connect** with flowers by opening up our senses. Take in the colours, the smell, even the textures of the petals and leaves. Perhaps the plants you see are in an area where they have been deliberately planted or tended by people, either now or in the past.

We can **Keep Learning**, there are hundreds of web pages devoted to the plants and an equal number of books and television programmes. This pack will tell you a little about folklore and how plants live their lives. Why not look online and see what else you can learn?

Plants and flowers are all around us, and are vital to the ecosystem we all share but we rarely **Take Notice** and look very closely at them. It's amazing how much we miss out in nature when we just walk through without paying attention to what is around us.

We can **Give** by giving ourselves a break from the drama of the current events and focusing on the little things around us that give us pleasure and by sharing these with others, in person or online. We can give back by learning how to care for plants and how the plants we grow can help others.





Wild Ways Well



BE ACTIVE – Take part in health walks and practical outdoor activities. Explore your local paths, woods and greenspaces.

Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about their lives.

The Wild Ways Well project encourages people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health to get outside for some daily exercise and experience nature.

Remember to observe Social Distancing, stay 2m apart and only walk in your local area.

Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves you have a chance to slow down, relax and take your attention away from current events.

This guide will help you to try out some environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the internationally recognised Five Ways to Wellbeing mental health framework.

CONNECT – Meet new people. Connect with the people, the wildlife and the nature that's all around us.



GIVE – Your time to be in nature. Give something back by sharing experiences and undertaking conservation tasks.

TAKE NOTICE – Note the changing cycles of life. Use your senses. Listen to birds, smell the flowers, live in the moment.



LEARN – Identify plants and wildlife, try new crafts, learn new skills. Discover things about nature and about yourself.





Beautiful Bluebells

Late Spring is a great time to look out for bluebells in Cumbernauld. These beautiful flowers can carpet the ground and their delicate smell fills the air in places like Cumbernauld Glen and Luggiebank.

Common Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) are native to the UK—indeed the UK is home to half the world's population of this flower. It is only really here that we get the famous “Bluebell Woods” with their carpet of flowers in late spring. They prefer shady habitats, often in concert with Oak trees. Unfortunately this damp, cool, shady habitat is under threat from climate change and habitat loss, and the bluebells themselves are threatened by interbreeding with the invasive Spanish Bluebell. We need to protect these special bluebell woods, or we will lose them forever.

They were first officially recorded in the UK by the botanist John Gerard who wrote about them in his book the “Great Herbal” in 1597

“The blew Hare-Bells or English Jacinth is very common throughout all England. It hath long narrow leaves leaning towards the ground, among which spring up naked or bare stalks laden with many hollow blew floures of a strong sweet smell somewhat fluffing the head. After which come coddles or round knobs containing a great quantity of small black shining seed. The root is bulbous, full of a slimy glewish juice, which will serve to set feathers upon arrows instead of glew, or to paste books with ; whereof is made the best starch...”

The blew hare-bells grow wilde in woods, copses and in the borders of fields everywhere throughout England.

They floure from the beginning of May unto the end of June.





cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk



What's in a name?

The native bluebell is officially known as the common (or English) bluebell. Its scientific name is *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* which translates as *the unlettered hyacinth*.

Lots of plants and flowers have different common names. In some places and times common bluebells have been known as

Granfer Griggles
Cra'tae (Crowtoes)
Cuckoo's Boots
Lady's Nightcap
Witches' Thimbles
Fairy Flowers
Dead Man's Bells
Goosey Gander

Do you know any others?

Bluebell Factoids

From the Hyacinthoide family, there are 11 species in this family but only *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* is native to the UK

It takes at least 5 years for a bluebell seed to grow and flower. They are endangered and are protected in the UK under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.

They are almost always blue but there are very rare white variants.

It is possible to make a type of glue from their petals which in past times was used to glue feathers to arrows and for bookbinding.

All parts of a bluebell are poisonous to humans and animals, causing vomiting, diarrhoea and a lowered pulse.

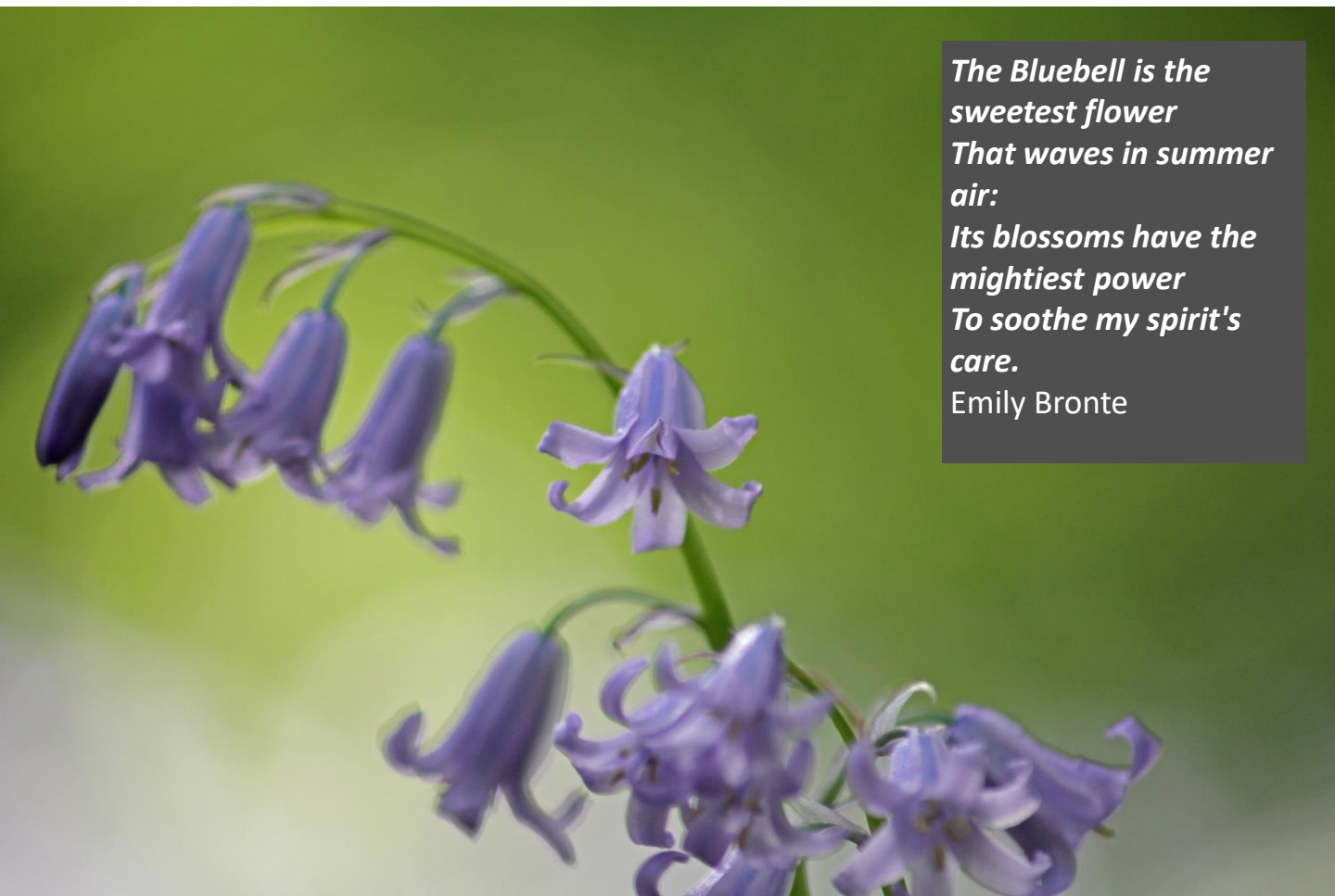
Research is ongoing into chemical compounds found in bluebells which can be used to treat cancer and HIV.

They are an ancient woodland indicator, especially when found alongside Oak trees.





Common Bluebells have strap shaped, hairless, pointed leaves and long flowering stems which can be up to 50cm tall. There are up to 20 sweet smelling flowers on each stem, all on the same side, causing the stem's distinctive 'drooping' form. which droops to one side. The flowers are bell shaped and blue—or very rarely white. Each flower has 6 upturned petals and creamy white pollen.



*The Bluebell is the
sweetest flower
That waves in summer
air:
Its blossoms have the
mightiest power
To soothe my spirit's
care.*
Emily Bronte





Draw a Bluebell

Sketch or draw a bluebell—it doesn't matter what your skill level is,
express yourself!



cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk



Spanish Bluebells

The Spanish bluebell is native to Portugal and Spain but it was brought to the UK as a garden plant and has spread into the countryside. Spanish bluebells grow faster and spread quicker than common bluebells. The two species also readily interbreed producing highly fertile hybrids. Well meaning gardeners still buy and plant the Spanish variety, helping it to spread to new areas, unfortunately once Spanish bluebells take hold eventually all the native bluebells disappear.



There are several notable differences between Spanish and Native bluebells. Spanish Bluebells come in many different colours. Although you may occasionally see a white common bluebell this is fairly unusual, Spanish bluebells can be pale blue, deep blue, pink or white.

The pollen in the Spanish variety is blue tinged, whereas the common flower pollen is creamy white.

Spanish bluebells have little, or no, scent compared to the delicate sweet smell of the native bluebell.

Spanish bluebells have flowers all around the upright stem, rather than to one side of a drooping stem. Spanish bluebells also have much broader leaves.





Folklore

In Scotland bluebells are symbolic of everlasting love (though they also have a darker side). In the rest of the UK however they are more associated with death and grief and are often planted on graves.

The flowers are linked with fairies and it is believed that the ringing of bluebells will summon them. A human who heard a bluebell ring would soon die—In Scottish folklore fairies were often dangerous creatures and to be avoided. A field of bluebells is believed to be filled with fairy magic and fairies would try to lure people to wander into a ring of bluebells where they would fall under fairy enchantment and be trapped forever.

In parts of Scotland they are called 'Aul Man's Bells' and to pick them is regarded as very unlucky.

In England it was believed that hanging a garland of Bluebells around someone's neck would force them to speak the truth.

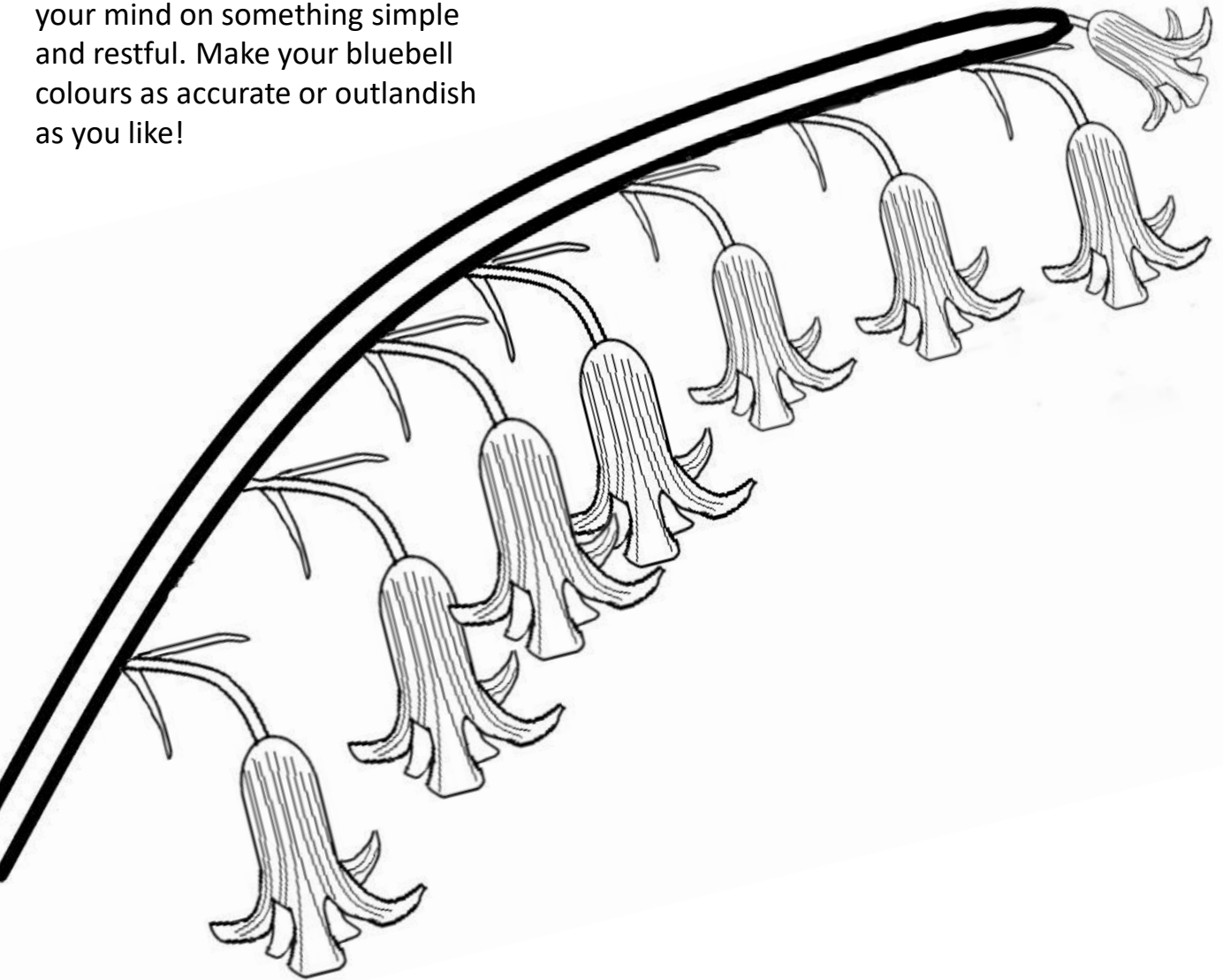
Do you know any others?





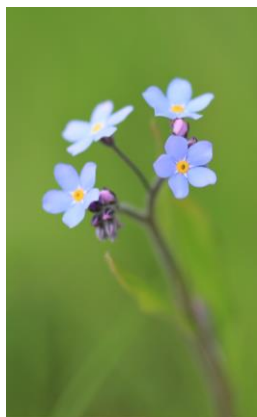
Colour a Bluebell

Colouring can be a very therapeutic thing to do, occupying your mind on something simple and restful. Make your bluebell colours as accurate or outlandish as you like!





Other Wildflowers to Spot this Week



Forget Me Not (*Myosotis* sp.)– Clusters of tiny, delicate blue flowers with bright yellow centres on long, sprawling stalks. Sometimes called ‘Mouse Ears’ or ‘Scorpion Grass’. They are associated with love, fidelity and memory. They grow in damp, shady places and there are actually more than 80 species worldwide. In other parts of the world they are used as a remembrance symbol, much like the Poppy in the UK. They are often used as a symbol for dementia care in the UK.



Cowslip (*Primula veris*)– Clusters of cup shaped yellow flowers with red highlights on a tall stalk which often seems to ‘nod’ in the wind. Sometimes known as Milk Maidens, Golden Drops or Freckled Faces. The name Cowslip might come from their tendency to grow in pastures where cow’s feet have broken the earth. They symbolise grace and beauty and were often scattered in front of wedding processions. They have a delicate scent which some people liken to the smell of apricots.



Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*)– Beautiful pale pink flowers on tall stalks. Loves damp grassy places and roadside verges. Its name came from its tendency to flower just as the cuckoo bird arrives back from migration. Other names include Lady’s Smock (which was quite a rude thing to say once upon a time!). It is the favoured food plant for caterpillars of Orange-Tip Butterflies and you can sometimes spot the tiny orange dots of eggs on the underside of the leaves.



Look Out For Bluebells

Spotting wildflowers is a great activity that anyone can try – and its almost as easy from your window or doorstep as it is on a walk! See how many of these things you can spot this week.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • A native common bluebell | 1pt |
| • A non native Spanish bluebell | -1pts |
| • A yellow wildflower | 1pts |
| • A pink wildflower | 2pts |
| • A blue wildflower (that isn't a bluebell) | 5pts |
| • A wildflower being visited by a bee | 5pts |
| • A wildflower being visited by a butterfly | 10pts |
| • A tree that is in flower | 1pts |
| • A wildflower that is smaller than a 5p piece | 2pts |
| • A wildflower bigger than a 50p piece | 5pts |
| • A caterpillar on a wildflower | 5pts |
| • A flower being picked by a bird | 10pts |

Total _____





Links

Go further with your Wild Ways Well activity by trying these links once you come home

Cumbernauld Living Landscape www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Wild Ways Well www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/project/wild-ways-well

Activities www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/get-involved/activities/

Facebook www.facebook.com/CumbernauldLivingLandscape

Twitter www.twitter.com/wildcumbernauld

The Conservation Volunteers www.tcv.org.uk/scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

SamH www.samh.org.uk

NHS Five Ways Well www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing

MIND coronavirus and your wellbeing www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership www.elament.org.uk/media/2229/19-ways-to-stay-connected-2.pdf

Plantlife www.plantlife.org.uk/uk

Woodland Trust Wildflowers www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/plants/wild-flowers

Wildlife Trusts Wildflowers www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/wildflowers



cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk