G club

The G Club magazine from greenwood

OCTOBER 2023

PLANT FOCUS

Potentilla fruticosa

PESTS FOCUS

Sciarid Flies

PLANTING INSPIRATION

Creating a drought tolerant garden

Planting for Biodiversity

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY

Learn about our recent projects and our commitment to enhancing local communities and biodiversity

SUSTAINABILITY

Greenwood is now growing 99% peat-free

Plan your planting scheme with confidence

With **Watch It Grow**, you can pre-select the plants you need, to your specification, in your designated time frame.

- **Regular photographic updates**
  Receive updates for visual assurance and to see how your plants are progressing.
- **Now available with peat-free growing medium**
  Part of our commitment to being fully peat-free by the end of 2023.

Contact us today to see how we can support your project requirements with our Watch It Grow offering.

05

An insightful day at Fresh Acres nursery with the Royal Horticultural Society, showcasing our peat-free journey. Working together for a greener future!

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The Benefits of G club

We are pleased to highlight the benefits of G Club, our client loyalty programme that recognises and rewards our clients.

The table below details the exclusive Gold, Silver and Bronze tier benefits - including bonus credits, complimentary and enhanced delivery service, and for some clients, a complimentary trip to Greenwood Holland.

On top of the G Club rewards, you will benefit from excellent service from the dedicated G Team; access to our innovative tools, like the Tender Tool; private tours of Fresh Acres HQ on request; and opportunities for continued professional development through the Greenwood Academy.

	G club GOLD TIER	G club SILVER TIER	G club BRONZE TIER
Credit bonus based on quarterly spend	3% Credit bonus	2% Credit bonus	1% Credit bonus
Complimentary delivery	all orders over £500	all orders over £750	all orders over £1000
Hiab, Moffett, FORS, and split deliveries (chargeable)	●	●	●
Dedicated G Team	●	●	●
Access to Tender Tool	●	●	●
Fresh Acres HQ tour	●	●	●
Consultation and advice	●	●	●
Greenwood Academy CPD	●	●	●
Bespoke photography (on request)	●	●	×
Complimentary trip to Holland (two people, once a year)	●	×	×
Sustainability and community partnering	●	×	×
Annual Business Planning Session	●	×	×

Business Updates

Introducing the Greenwood Specification

Have you heard about our new book, the Greenwood Specification? It's a comprehensive guide to specifying plants for the commercial landscaping industry. The handbook is a distillation of Greenwood's landscape supply experience over the last thirty years, and has been developed as a tool to outline supplied heights and related pot sizes for different plant varieties, with descriptions for each species, their growing requirements and wildlife benefits. Our aim is to support our clients in creating successful and enduring planting schemes. Find out how to order your copy on page 8.

RHS visit Fresh Acres nursery

We were delighted to welcome the Royal Horticultural Society to Fresh Acres for an update on our peat-free growing. In attendance were Professor Alistair Griffiths, Director of Science and Collections; Dr Mark Gush, Head of the Environmental Horticulture team; Duncan Mclean, Head Plant Buyer; and Dr Raghavendra Prasad, who is leading RHS research to support the industry to transition to peat-free growing media.

Greenwood is currently using peat-free compost across all six of our nursery sites, with propagation of young plants being the final step in the transition to peat-free, due to be completed very soon. We look forward to the opportunity of working with the RHS in future, with a shared mission of helping the horticultural industry make the important step of becoming peat-free.

New ordering and credit control processes

Thank you for your continued co-operation and loyal custom as we implement our new ordering guidelines. By defining parameters around order timings we can ensure we deliver a consistent and effortless client experience. Please refer to our website for the full Ordering Guidelines.

We have also introduced a formal credit control process with a focus on providing structure and transparency. This will ensure that our financial operations are robust and able to tolerate any turbulence in the market and will aid us in providing a service with the highest level of consistency and quality to our clients.

Greenwood honey

Our bees at Fresh Acres have been very busy and we have recently extracted our first harvest of honey. It's fascinating to see how quickly the bees have established in our new hives. Bees play a vital role in the pollination of many flowering plants, securing the production of fruits and seeds that sustain many animal species, including humans. They are facing huge threats from habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, and a reduction in plant diversity which is why the beehives are an important part of Greenwood's sustainability strategy.

Planting Inspiration: Creating a drought tolerant garden

***Perovskia* 'Blue Spire'**

***Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'**

With climate change affecting our planet in many ways, we should adapt by planting heat and drought-resistant species, especially in regions like southern England with frequent hosepipe bans and mild winters. These plants offer striking aesthetics and demand less maintenance and water.

Drought-tolerant plants from arid regions, like the Mediterranean, have adapted to thrive in low-rainfall, well-drained conditions, and many species can be successfully planted together. Some have moisture-trapping hairy foliage, while others use waxy leaves to reduce water loss under the sun.

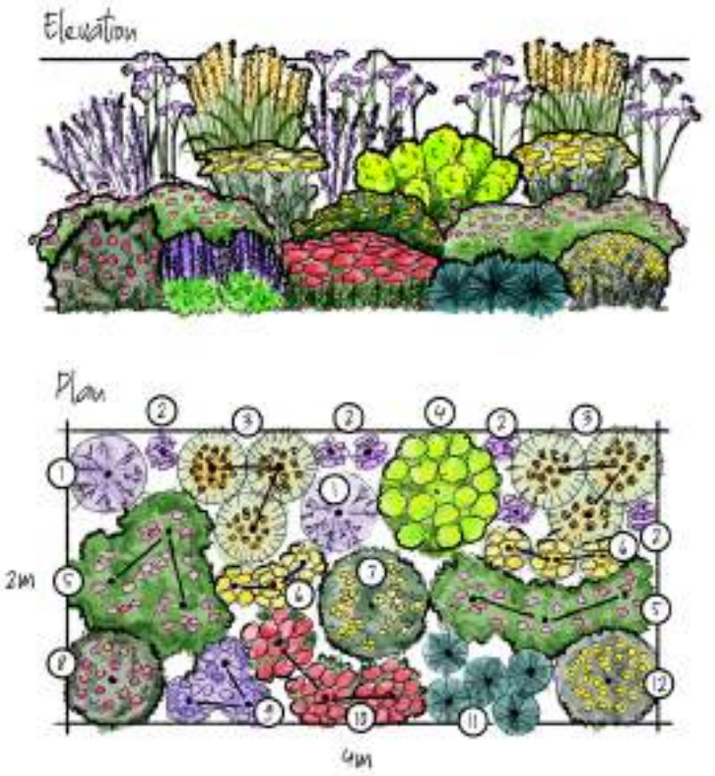
Researching native species is a great way to start planning your drought tolerant green space, as these are often highly adaptable to their local weather conditions, including extreme weather events. In addition to their reduced water needs, native plants also nurture other elements of the ecosystem and provide benefits to biodiversity. They are more resilient to local pests, leading to less requirement for plant feed and pest control measures.

We have created a drought tolerant planting plan, with a variety of textures and vibrant flowers. To create a gravel garden, lay weed-suppressing membrane over the soil and add gravel for moisture retention. Ideal for sunny, well-drained, low-fertility areas.

Towards the back of the planting plan, we have included *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire' (1), *Verbena bonariensis* (2), *Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (3), and *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* (4). *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire' (1) is an erect, deciduous perennial with grey-green leaves and panicles of small, lavender-blue flowers. *Verbena bonariensis* (2) is great for adding height with its tall branching stems with flattened heads of lilac-purple flowers. *Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (3) is a clump-forming grass with arching leaves and feathery plumes which emerge in summer. It brings lovely winter interest when its stems catch the frost.

Euphorbia characias subsp. *wulfenii* (4) provides structure with its upright heads of vibrant, lime green flowers and oblong, grey-green foliage.

Positioned in the middle of the planting plan are *Geranium endressi* 'Wargrave Pink' (5), *Achillea* 'Moonshine' (6), and *Brachyglottis* 'Sunshine' (7). *Geranium endressi* 'Wargrave Pink' (5) provides a long season of flowering with its saucer-shaped, pink blooms. *Achillea* 'Moonshine' (6) has grey-green foliage with flat heads of canary yellow flowers; it works well combined with ornamental grasses and attracts butterflies and bees. *Brachyglottis* 'Sunshine' (7) features hairy, silver-grey foliage and bright yellow, daisy-like summer flowers.



A striking and colourful combination of *Cistus* × *pulverulentus* 'Sunset' (8), *Nepeta* × *faassenii* (9), *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' (10), *Festuca glauca* (11), and *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (12) have been included at the front of the drought tolerant planting plan. *Cistus* × *pulverulentus* 'Sunset' (8) boasts grey-green, wavy leaves and masses of magenta flowers with prominent yellow centres. *Nepeta* × *faassenii* (9) has lovely spikes of lavender flowers, alongside aromatic, hairy, grey-green leaves. Providing stunning autumn colour, *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' (10) has fleshy, grey-green, succulent-like foliage and flat-topped, salmon pink flowerheads which transition to a stunning pink-bronze, and eventually copper-red. *Festuca glauca* (11) provides a contrast in texture with its upright tussocks of stiff, blue, needle-like foliage and blue flowerheads in summer. Lastly, *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (12) has aromatic, finely divided, light grey foliage with small, button-like, scented yellow flowers. It's a nice edging plant for a sunny border and adds a wonderful pop of colour in summer.

Xeriscaping is an attractive landscaping approach that minimizes or eliminates the need for future watering. It aims to establish low-maintenance, healthy plants while conserving water resources. Drought-tolerant species, mixed with soil, mulch, and rocks, thrive under both dry and wet conditions. Grouping plants can create a beautiful prairie-style effect, and ornamental grasses are an excellent, low-water alternative to high-maintenance lawns.

Keep a look out for more planting inspiration plans in future issues of G Club or by visiting: greenwoodplants.co.uk/planting-inspiration/

Planting inspiration

Discover endless inspiration for your planting schemes, where creativity meets nature.

Client Focus: The Greenwood Specification

A comprehensive guide to specifying plants for the commercial landscaping industry

Here at Greenwood, we are absolutely delighted to be launching our very own book: the Greenwood Specification.

The Greenwood Specification is a distillation of more than thirty years' landscape supply experience, and has been developed as a tool to outline supplied heights and related pot sizes for different plant varieties. The guide demonstrates how the horticultural industry can grow sustainably while producing and maintaining consistently healthy plants that will continue to thrive in our changing environment.

We originally created our 'Every Plant Matters' handbook for the G Team, to refer to as a best practice guide when growing plants on our nurseries. This handbook garnered a lot of interest from clients, and we realised that there was a gap in the market for a guide to specifying plants for large-scale landscaping and amenity projects.

We have had lots of conversations with clients over the course of many years regarding the heights of various plants in certain pot sizes, as well as optimal planting and flowering seasons, so the Greenwood Specification has been carefully curated by our experienced horticulturalists to present key information on our most popular plant varieties. It provides a plant guide to aid landscape architect practices, garden designers, and commercial landscapers in their plant selections, ensuring that expectations for plant size versus pot size are met throughout the seasons.

Not only does the book contain the extensive planting information for a massive variety of our most popular plants, but included are a number of articles of interest to growers and landscapers. This includes pieces on sustainability, including sections about our water self-sufficiency, and our Greenwood Community donations. Alongside this, there are various other topics discussed, including the importance of biodiversity in our green spaces, planting for the changing environment, as well as the importance of being flexible, and guides on planting best practice. Having a strong understanding of the importance of what we do, and how we can do it sustainably, is vital to the continued success of Greenwood, which is led strongly by our amazing G Team.

The Greenwood Specification can serve as the ultimate reference for landscape architects, commercial landscapers, gardeners, and indeed any horticulturalist that believes exactly as we do at Greenwood, that Every Plant Matters. The book provides in-depth information about the optimal heights, pot sizes, planting preferences, flowering times and more for over 400 different species of grasses, shrubs, ferns, climbers, herbaceous perennials, and trees. This information can be crucial to getting the very best out of every single plant that we sell, and that our clients include in their commercial projects, enabling the plants to truly thrive.

At Greenwood, we always strive for excellence in everything we do, and providing an effortless client experience is at the very heart of our company's values. The Greenwood Specification will ensure that we are able to provide our clients with a definitive source of information on all types of different plants, and help them to create successful and enduring planting schemes.

Plant Focus: Potentilla fruticosa

Native to the Northern Hemisphere, Potentilla is a genus of around 500 plant species within the Rosaceae family. They can be either shrubs or perennials, but here we are focussing on *Potentilla fruticosa*—a species of shrubs which are commonly known as shrubby cinquefoil. *Potentilla fruticosa* is a hardy, deciduous shrub and depending on the variety, tends to reach a height of between 70cm to 1.2m.

Potentilla fruticosa is known for its stunning, long-lasting saucer-shaped flowers in various colors like pink, yellow, orange, and white. It blooms from spring to autumn, with a vibrant display in summer. This shrub typically has silvery, hairy leaves that drop in November and regrow in April and May.

A highly versatile, low maintenance planting option, *Potentilla fruticosa* can be grown as an informal hedge, used as groundcover on slopes, or planted within flower borders and beds. It works particularly well as part of a rock or cottage garden planting theme, and it also tolerates drought, urban pollution, and salt-laden air. *Potentilla fruticosa* is great for supporting biodiversity, as its pollen and nectar-rich flowers attract pollinators, such as butterflies and bees.

Some of our favourite *Potentilla fruticosa* varieties include *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Abbotswood', *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Elizabeth', *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Goldfinger', *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Primrose Beauty', and *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Red Ace'. *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Abbotswood' is a deciduous shrub that grows up to around 1m in height, with small, pinnate, dark green foliage. Its white flowers put on a stunning display from May to October. Excellent as a specimen shrub, informal hedge, or within a sunny border,

***Potentilla fruticosa* 'Abbotswood'**

Potentilla fruticosa 'Abbotswood' is an incredibly versatile planting option. *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Elizabeth' is a compact, deciduous shrub growing up to around 90cm. It has grey-green leaves with masses of yellow, nectar-rich flowers from May to November, providing colour across multiple seasons.

Potentilla fruticosa 'Goldfinger' grows to 1.2m tall with dark green leaves and abundant bright yellow flowers from June to October. It's ideal for sunny borders and informal hedging. *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Primrose Beauty' is a compact shrub, reaching 1m in height, with grey-green foliage and primrose-yellow flowers from May to October. It's a charming addition to low-maintenance borders.

***Potentilla fruticosa* 'Goldfinger'**

Potentilla fruticosa 'Red Ace' is a smaller bushy shrub, about 70cm in height, featuring bright red flowers with yellow centers. It's well-suited for rockeries and gravel gardens due to its preference for well-drained soil.

The most ideal times of the year to plant *Potentilla fruticosa* are during spring or autumn; spring is preferable, as it gives the roots the longest period of time for a successful establishment. *Potentilla fruticosa* isn't particularly fussy about soil types and can thrive in the majority of soil conditions; it can tolerate alkaline or clay soils, and prefers sunny or partially shaded, well-drained spots. Varieties with vibrant coloured blooms can fade in direct sunlight, so these prefer partial shade during the hottest hours of the day.

Potentilla fruticosa is generally a low maintenance planting option. Simply trimming once a year can help to keep it neat and tidy; it's best to do this early in spring before any flower buds appear, as removing these can lead to reduced flowering. If required, *Potentilla fruticosa* can tolerate hard pruning. Whilst it's establishing, it's important to maintain a regular watering routine to encourage healthy roots. However, once *Potentilla fruticosa* is established, it can cope well with drought. To help retain moisture, mulch with biodegradable or organic materials, such as wood chips or leaves, leaving a mulch-free circle surrounding the base of the plant. If your *Potentilla fruticosa* does not receive enough sunlight, their flowers can be drastically diminished; if this happens, you should carry out hard pruning to roughly a third of the size, to help them to recover. When it comes to plant feed, *Potentilla fruticosa* requires minimal feeding; it can be fed with an all-purpose fertiliser once a year in spring, until fully established.

Potentilla fruticosa does not usually suffer from pests and diseases. However, if it hasn't been provided with ideal conditions and there is too much shade or high humidity, *Potentilla fruticosa* can suffer from powdery mildew, downy mildew, or leaf spot. Over watering or insufficient drainage can also lead to root rot.

Powdery mildew and downy mildew are fungal diseases that damage plants. Powdery mildew appears as white, cobweb-like patches and can spread quickly. Biological fungicides are the best treatment. Downy mildew causes withering and discoloration; early detection allows leaf removal, but severe cases may require plant disposal. Leaf spot, caused by various fungal or bacterial diseases, shows as brown or black patches with a darker margin, leading to stunted growth. Organic solutions with sulphur or copper octanoate can treat leaf spot.

With its long flowering season, as well as being low maintenance, it's clear to see why *Potentilla fruticosa* is such a popular choice for gardens.

- Lara Matthams
Content Marketing Executive

***Potentilla fruticosa* 'Red Ace'**

greenwood Community

Projects

Donating plants to meaningful community schemes

Donation of plants to Yapton Eco Group. Flowerbed near the new children's playground

We have been busy over the past couple of months with our plant contributions to schools, colleges, and community organisations, and our aim is to reach 24 Greenwood Community projects by the end of 2023. A few of our recent projects include donations to Yapton Eco Group, Chichester SEND Foundation, Tangmere Primary Academy, and Angmering School Lavinia Norfolk Centre.

Earlier in the year, Yapton Eco Group got in touch with us for support in enhancing green areas in Yapton village, particularly focusing on the main village noticeboard and the new children's playground. To beautify these spaces, we donated a variety of plants, including *Euonymus japonicus* 'Bravo,' an evergreen shrub with variegated foliage and green summer flowers, sometimes followed by pink autumn fruits. Additionally, *Hypericum* 'Hidcote,' with its lance-shaped evergreen to semi-evergreen leaves and cup-shaped golden yellow summer flowers, and aromatic *Rosmarinus officinalis,* known for its narrow green leaves with white undersides, used in cooking and boasting light blue to white flowers in late spring. Lastly, *Hebe* 'Midsummer Beauty,' a rounded medium-sized shrub with purple-tinged foliage and racemes of small lilac flowers that fade to white over time. Our plant donations have added year-round vibrancy to Yapton village's green spaces, enhancing their beauty.

We recently donated an array of plants to Chichester SEND (Special Education Needs & Disabilities) Foundation—a college that offers support for adults with learning or physical disabilities, helping them to acquire skills and training so they can work and live independently. This foundation is very close to our hearts, as our own Anna Tatarczak's daughter attends the college. As part of the donation, we gave the students a tour of Fresh Acres nursery that they thoroughly enjoyed. The students then spent time researching the plants we donated, finding out their mature size and ideal planting conditions to help them thrive in their gardens.

We welcomed Chichester SEND Foundation for a tour of our nursery. Kevin Merritt with the students at Fresh Acres nursery

Our sensory plant donation to Tangmere Primary Academy

Another recent donation was made to Tangmere Primary Academy, situated in Tangmere, West Sussex. The Academy aims to provide every child with the primary experience that best prepares them for their futures. They were keen to provide a sensory garden for the schoolchildren, so we donated plants with brightly coloured and highly scented flowers; soft and aromatic foliage; and grasses which add movement and sound. As part of our donation, we included some fragant sensory plants. *Coreopsis lanceolata* 'Sterntaler' is a pollinator-friendly perennial with lance-shaped green foliage and vibrant yellow flowers, each featuring a bronze spot at the base. *Salvia greggii*, an evergreen shrub, attracts butterflies and hummingbirds with its aromatic leaves and colorful two-lipped flowers in shades like pink, red, violet, or yellow. To add texture, we included *Stachys byzantina*, a drought-tolerant perennial known for its silver-green, velvety foliage and purple-pink summer blooms. *Stipa tenuissima*, a deciduous grass, provides gentle movement with its wispy upright leaves and feathery silver-green summer flowers—perfect for a sensory garden. *Thymus citriodorus*, prized for its lemon scent, is a compact evergreen shrub with variegated diamond-shaped leaves and lavender-pink summer flowers. The new sensory garden at the school was a hit among the children, who enjoyed exploring and learning about plant care.

Lastly, a plant donation was made to Lavinia Norfolk Centre—a Specialist Support Facility for students with a physical or sensory impairment within Angmering School. This facility enables each student to be happy, reach their full potential, and to be as independent as possible to play a full role in society throughout adulthood.

We donated a range of plants for their green spaces, including species with a mixture of colours, scents, and textures; the aim was to create a sensory garden, particularly for students with limited sight. The students at Lavinia Norfolk Centre are highly involved in the two garden areas; they actively help with the planting and maintenance of the gardens. These are lovely areas for the students to be able to socialise and enjoy their lunch, surrounded by the plants which they have helped to care for.

Helping out our local communities and enhancing biodiversity is a priority to us, and we are proud of the many projects we've donated plants to so far. We aim to reach 24 community projects this year and are making great progress towards this goal - we would love to extend our plant donations to gardening projects that are meaningful to our clients. Please get in touch if you have a local community project that would benefit from a plant donation - email hello@greenwoodplants.co.uk.

- Kevin Merritt
Greenwood Choice Manager

Angmering School Lavinia Norfolk Centre students help with the planting and maintenance of the gardens

Planting for Biodiversity

Encouraging and protecting our precious wildlife

Bee on *Mahonia x media* 'Charity'

Biodiversity encompasses the diverse animal and plant life within a habitat, vital for our planet and future generations. However, species populations are dwindling due to various threats. Introducing a rich variety of plant species is an effective way of promoting wildlife to green spaces; through colors, shapes, fragrances, and flowering and fruiting seasons. You can also incorporate native, near-native, and exotic plants to enhance biodiversity and the beauty of our environment.

It's beneficial to encourage pollinators to your landscape, as pollination maintains biodiversity; it promotes the growth of plants and crops, leading to a balanced ecosystem. Pollen and nectar from flowers provide food for pollinators, such as butterflies, bees, beetles, and wasps. Plants which flower and fruit in various seasons are ideal for attracting different species, as well as those with highly fragrant flowers.

Butterflies, vital pollinators, add movement and colour to landscapes. They are drawn to bright, scented flowers, feeding on nectar and transferring pollen, promoting seed production. Attract butterflies with plants like *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm,' featuring large yellow flowers with black-brown centers in late summer. *Verbena bonariensis* is another butterfly magnet, a tall perennial with lilac-purple flowers in late summer on branching stems.

Supporting pollinators is crucial, and you can achieve this by planting pollen and nectar-rich flowers throughout the year. In spring, consider *Helleborus foetidus*, a UK native perennial with lime green bell-shaped flowers and dark green foliage from January. *Rosmarinus officinalis*, an evergreen shrub with narrow, aromatic green leaves and light blue to white spring flowers, is another great choice.

For summer blooms, try *Digitalis purpurea*, a biennial with hairy oval leaves and magenta tubular flowers, and *Lonicera periclymenum*, a shrubby climber with green foliage, scented white to purple flushed summer flowers, and glossy red autumn berries. These selections will provide a continuous source of sustenance for pollinators.

In autumn, consider planting pollinator-friendly species like *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' (*Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude') and *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna.' *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' is an upright perennial with succulent grey-green foliage and flat-topped, salmon-pink flowerheads that transition to pink-bronze and copper-red from late summer. *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' is a perennial with rough, grey-green leaves and blue-black stems bearing violet-blue racemes from June to October. For winter, choose *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn,' a tall

Bee flying around *Digitalis purpurea*

deciduous shrub with dark green foliage and fragrant pink flowers on bare branches from November. *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' blooms with pale yellow spikes above spiky, dark green leaves from November to March, offering fragrance and bird-attracting berries.

Birds are an important part of our ecosystem, and a decline in their natural habitats makes bird friendly landscapes more vital than ever. They require natural food, including berries and seeds, which are provided through trees, shrubs, and lawns. In addition to food, birds require shelter, especially during cold weather and throughout the night; many plants and trees can provide these key elements. *Echinacea purpurea* is a useful perennial for seeds—especially if it's left during the winter; it has hairy foliage and large, solitary pink flowers with a central, orange-brown disk. *Symphoricarpos* × *chenaultii* 'Hancock' is a low growing, deciduous shrub with rooting branches, small leaves, and tiny white flowers which are followed by white, red speckled berries.

Trees serve as vital habitats for birds, offering nesting sites and essential food sources. *Malus* trees are excellent for both purposes, and we recommend *Malus* 'Red Sentinel' and *Malus* 'Evereste'. *Malus* 'Red Sentinel' is a deciduous tree, reaching up to 8m, adorned with highly fragrant white blossoms and glossy red fruits, providing autumnal beauty and nourishment for birds. Loved by thrushes and blackbirds, *Malus* 'Evereste' is a small deciduous tree up to 7m tall. It features red buds that open into white spring blossoms, followed by red-flushed orange-yellow crab apples and lobed green foliage turning yellow and orange in autumn. We also suggest *Amelanchier arborea* 'Robin Hill,' a small upright tree with bronze foliage transitioning to green, orange, and red, and *Ilex aquifolium*, an evergreen species with spiny green foliage, white spring flowers, and red autumn berries, offering shelter and sustenance for birds.

Promoting biodiversity in your green space extends beyond plant selection to pest control methods. Chemicals like pesticides and fungicides can harm biodiversity. Biological pest control, using living organisms to manage pests, offers an eco-friendly alternative. These methods are low or non-toxic and degrade quickly. We're expanding our use of biological controls and reducing chemical applications in our nurseries. We aim to cut pesticide use by 50%, exploring sustainable pest management approaches for a greener future.

- Lara Matthams
Content Marketing Executive

Bee on *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'

Pest Focus: Sciarid Flies

Sciarid flies (*Bradysia*), or otherwise known as fungus gnats, are part of the Sciaridae family, which is made up of over 250 species. They are often seen within the damp compost of soft cuttings and seedlings in greenhouses, as well as houseplants. Thriving in moist, warm, and humid conditions with high levels of organic matter, and being attracted to decomposition and decay, sciarid flies bring problems to propagation areas all year round.

Some species in the UK feed on rotting organic matter; these cause no harm and are part of our natural ecosystem. However, some are troublesome, as they breed in large numbers within damp compost and can cause significant damage to soft cuttings and seedlings. Usually, no damage will occur to healthy, mature plants.

Adult sciarid flies live on the surface of compost and can be seen flying slowly around plants; they are generally easy to detect. Although they don't directly harm plants, they can unfortunately cause indirect damage by encouraging the spread of disease. Their young feed on fungi, algae, and plant roots, and usually cause the most damage to plants by damaging root structures.

The sciarid life cycle has four stages which last for around 28 days. These comprise of the egg, four larval instars (larvae), pupal instar (pupa), and the adult. Sciarid adults measure around 1 to 5mm in length, with fairly long legs and a small head. They are grey-black in colour and have long antennae, with clearly veined wings. Their protruding antennae help to identify a specific sciarid fly infestation. Adult females deposit their eggs on the surface of the growing media, which hatch within a few days, in ideal conditions. The eggs of sciarid flies are tiny—around 0.1mm to 0.25mm—and yellow-white in colour. The larvae are legless and white in colour, whilst being slightly translucent. They have a black head with mouth parts that allow them to bite and chew, and they can grow up to around 5 to 12mm in length. The pupae are white and turn yellow-brown over time.

There are many methods to control the sciarid fly population. As a preventive, careful watering and hygiene methods can be adopted around the nursery, and early application of biological control methods can prevent or control an infestation. These methods can be combined to increase efficiency. Yellow sticky fly traps are a useful control method in greenhouses, and are great for avoiding chemicals. The traps are coated in glue and placed near plants where the adult flies are becoming a problem. The insects get stuck to these traps, and eventually die. This action helps to break the lifecycle of adult sciarid flies. These should not be hung outside as they can trap butterflies and hoverflies.

Hypoaspis miles, or scientifically known as *Stratiolaelaps scimitus*, is a small, light brown predatory mite that helps to biologically control sciarid flies. It inhabits the soil, as well as the area around the stem of the plant, and feeds on sciarid larvae. Another biological control method is Atheta (*Dalotia coriaria*)—a predatory beetle that aggressively and actively feeds on sciarid larvae. It is small and long in shape, with short wings and a brown body. It is placed on the surface of the plant substrate and will quickly search for prey. A pathogenic nematode, scientifically known as *Steinernema feltiae*, is another useful biological control method. It's watered onto growing media, where It helps to control sciarid larvae by entering through a natural opening, such as the mouth. It then feeds on the larvae and produces a natural bacterium that eventually kills it.

Biological pest control methods are environmentally friendly alternatives to using chemicals; these are either low or non-toxic, and can degrade quickly. We care about the pest control methods we use, and are increasing our use of biological pest control methods, whilst reducing any chemical use across the nurseries. We are trialling various methods to control pest populations in the most environmentally friendly way, and our goal is to reduce our pesticide use by 50%.

- Lara Matthams
Content Marketing Executive

Sustainability: Greenwood is now growing 99% peat-free

We are really pleased with the progress we're making towards our target of being completely peat-free before the end of 2023. We are now using peat-free growing media at all six of our nursery sites which is a huge achievement! All that remains is for our propagation department to transition over to peat-free – we are busy trialling some coir-based compost created especially for our young plants.

We've been running extensive trials on peat free alternatives since the beginning of 2022, exploring different types of growing media to use in our annual production of more than six million plants. The trials enable our production team to adjust the composition to ensure that the structure, pH and nutrient levels of the compost are consistent, and the irrigation programmes have been modified to suit the new compost composition.

As some of you may know, whilst peat compost provides a great growing medium for plants, harvesting peat from peatlands releases an enormous amount of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere, further contributing to climate change. As a responsible grower, it is vital that we continue to assess our carbon footprint, and try to reduce our impact on the environment. We are focussed on working with our supply chain to ensure that any purchased stock is peat-free. We have several European and UK suppliers now growing plants for the new season in peat-free compost.

Our continued successes in sustainability and innovation bring us closer to our goal of reaching Net Zero. We look forward to updating you on our progress as we introduce more green initiatives in 2024.

greenwood Choice

Our trade sales centre is open for business, six days a week.

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For more information or to check availability, call Kevin on 01243 939551 or email kevin@greenwoodplants.co.uk.

Opening hours:
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