

Station flowers



Forming a backdrop to the vibrant flowers in the wooden planters at the station is a more muted display of wild flowers and grasses. When the Station Partnership invited our group to contribute to the beautification of the station environment, we decided that the poor soil by the platforms would be a very good basis for a community of wild flowers. There were some already there, struggling among the litter, rampant grasses, heaps of rubble and other rubbish and being shaded by the Cupressus hedge. Oxeye daisies were the most obvious but there were also primroses, lesser celandines, creeping buttercups, ground ivy, selfheal and nipplewort and several other less noticeable species. With many wild flowers and their associated insects disappearing from our landscape, we wanted to do what we could to redress this.

Our work started in 2010 with a good number of volunteers turning out to cut the overgrown vegetation and rake it away, cut back the hedge, and remove the rubble and rubbish (a large skip full). We scraped some of the soil bare and sowed wild flower seeds in the autumn of 2010. Since then, we have arranged a regular annual cutting regime with Southern and throughout the year we rake up the cuttings, clear the continued accumulation of rubbish (please take your empty cans, bottles, crisp and sweetie wrappings and beer glasses home with you), trim back the hedge and sow more seeds as needed.

There have been successes and setbacks. Successes because the sowings have resulted in a good number of wild species establishing – 44 at the last count. Some are colourful and some are not very obvious but all bring benefits to wildlife of some sort, especially insects. Setbacks, because the cutting regime didn't always work out, despite huge amounts of goodwill (and seeds to replace accidentally mown flowers) from Southern. But we are hopeful that (franchise willing) all will go smoothly this year.

In the coming months, if you are catching a train, set off a bit early and take some time to enjoy the wild flowers, as well as the planters. Look out for common knapweed, red campion, bird's-foot-trefoil, tufted vetch, lady's bedstraw, corncockle and oxeye daisy, among others. We'll be putting up posters illustrating these species, and more, on the station noticeboards.

We decided to add a bit of variety this year by clearing a narrow strip of soil between the down platform fence and the car park and sowing a mix of cornfield annuals: corn cockle, corn chamomile, cornflower, corn marigold and common poppy. We hope this will produce a brilliant show of flowers this summer (but I will just go down to check that they are germinating).

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