

Chalk Hill Jewels

Garden Lawns Survey

Did you know your lawn may have come from 1930s south downs turf?

Many of the garden lawns in Highcliffe contain special communities of wildflowers and grasses that are found on the chalk downs. They are mini versions of St Catherine's Hill.

These lawns are really special because they contain plants that have been lost from our local fields with modern herbicides and chemicals.

You may be familiar with daisy, buttercup and clover. These flowers will be providing important nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies and other insects. Do you have a dandelion looking flower that is smaller and lemon yellow? That would be mouse-ear hawkweed, which has silvery hairs on the underside of the leaves.

Many of the garden lawns contain a staggering 20+ chalk grassland species, such as:

- Marjoram - you can dry the leaves and flowers to use in cooking.
- Ox-Eye Daisy - the big flowered, knee high daisy.
- Hedge Bedstraw - a more delicate version of cleavers (sticky weed).
- Red Clover - the flowers can be dried and used as a tea.
- Birds-Foot-Trefoil - the seed heads look like a bird's foot.
- Bugle- little blue tower of flowers and grows on runners.
- Selfheal -little purple flowers, can flower on short turf.
- Field Madder- tiny, four petalled lilac flowers.
- Crested Dog's-Tail - a grass whose upright flower spike looks like a Labrador's tail, flat on one side.
- Quaking Grass- delicate, small grass with quivering flowerheads.
- Sweet Vernal Grass - flowers in April and May. The roots smell strongly of coumarin, a sweet astringent scent, like hay.

Why is this important?

You may have heard of Plantlife's 'No Mow May', or 'Let it Bloom in June' campaigns, which are seeking to highlight the value of our backyard lawns. This is because, collectively, gardens across the UK cover a large area and that has a big effect.

- A natural lawn helps with water infiltration, which reduces flooding and sewage outfalls in our rivers.
- Lawns provide important food and shelter for wildlife.
- Green spaces reduce heat spikes during our more extreme weather.
- A wildlife rich garden is good for our mental health too, bringing us into contact with awesome slow worms, hedgehogs and humming-bird hawk moths.

Looking after our Chalk Hill Jewels

The Bar End Meadows project is seeking to survey the chalk grassland resource across Bar End and Highcliffe, at the start of the South Downs Way. We would like to help people look after their special lawns so that they continue to be part of our local history and a resource for future generations of people and wildlife.

Unfortunately, gardens are at risk of being converted to hard landscaping, such as driveways, which can cause more runoff during high rainfall, and become heat sinks during hot weather. Fake grass can burn bare feet (pets included) and has zero value to wildlife above or below ground.

Advice is available to help you find a lawn mowing regime that works for you, and we would love to harvest seed from species rich gardens, to enhance others in the neighbourhood.

If you would like to register for a lawn survey and advice
Email rachel@landloreconsulting.com or message me on:
Facebook @Land Lore Consulting
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