

The Bees' Needs

let's get buzzing
in Buriton



August - October: Preparing for Goodbye and Beginning

This is the third instalment of our year in the life of Belinda, our local bumblebee. She'll tell us what she and other pollinators are doing at this time of year, how she helps people, and how the way we look after our gardens can be life or death for her.

The light changes now. Mornings are cooler, and the sun sinks earlier each day.

My role is almost finished. New queens have been raised, fed well, and sent out into the world. They mate, then search for safe places to overwinter. The future of my species rests entirely on their survival.

Many of us have spent the summer gathering food, feeding the colony and caring for the next generation. As autumn deepens, our lives will naturally come to an end. But the workers continue foraging as long as they can – late flowers like ivy, knapweed, thistles, sedum and autumn asters are essential, fuelling the last efforts of the colony and giving young queens the energy they need before winter.

Other pollinators are doing the same – butterflies migrating or sheltering, solitary bees sealing their nests, hoverflies feeding before winter. Some will spend the cold months as eggs, larvae or pupae, waiting for warmer days.

Pollination still matters now. Ivy flowers, often overlooked, support a huge range of insects and later produce berries

for birds. Wild plants pollinated in autumn shape next spring's growth, stabilising soils and feeding wildlife.

Humans can help most by resisting the urge to tidy everything away. Fallen leaves, hollow stems, seed heads and dead wood are not mess – they are shelter. Many of my cousins will spend winter inside plant stems, beneath leaves or in sheltered corners of gardens.

Planting late-flowering plants, allowing ivy to bloom, and leaving seed heads standing all make a profound difference. Avoiding autumn pesticide use helps ensure young queens are not poisoned just before winter.

This season is about endings, but also hope. If humans give us space to finish our work, shelter us through the cold, and welcome us back when spring arrives, the next generation will have a chance.

