

Flowering balconies and window boxes

Multicoloured flowers in window boxes and planters add visual appeal, and also attract numerous pollinators such as different types of bees, hoverflies and beetles. Unfortunately, traditional balcony plants such as geraniums and busy Lizzies (*Impatiens*) provide little or no vital nectar or pollen. Generally, it is only species with single or semi-single flowers that provide any significant amount of food for insects. Plants with double flowers produce practically no pollen despite the beauty of their flowers.

If you wish to increase the supply of food for pollinators and thus contribute to biodiversity, good choices include the particularly nutritious wild perennial plants of central European origin. Small, drought-tolerant annual and perennial garden plants, herbs, container plants, small bushes and bulb plants provide food for many pollinating insects.

Advantages of regional plants

Regional annuals, biennials and perennials have a hard time competing with the exuberant blooms, bright colours and shapes of classic balcony plants and their long flowering period. Yet they offer other advantages:

- There is no need to buy new plants every spring: wild perennials can be left in their containers for several years.
- Second partial flowering after the summer cut, from mid to late June.
- Aesthetically pleasing and can be planted even in winter.
- Local species provide food, nesting opportunities and winter shelter for insects, such as certain breeds of wild bees.



multiplicity

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Biodiversity at home

- Natural plantings are easy to maintain:
 - weed occasionally during the year,
 - remove dead flower heads to encourage new growth,
 - water moderately,
 - do not let the soil of permanent plantings dry out over winter,
 - remove foliage in spring and cut dead stems,
 - overgrown perennials can be divided or repotted,
 - fertilisation with a superficial, moderate application of compost,
 - renewal of used soil.

Points to remember

- When choosing plants, it is important to take into account the balcony's exposure: the quantities of nectar and pollen available depend, among other things, on local conditions (light, temperature, soil, nutrients, pH value, resistance to wind and rain).
- Since the plants stay outside even in winter and frozen water can cause containers to burst, choose frost-resistant clay, plastic or metal tubs and pots. During winter, lay wooden slats under the containers.

- Containers must be well drained to avoid stagnant water: drainage hole, drainage layer.
- Flower pot saucers can be used to prevent the plant from drying out too much.
- The larger the planter, the better: the more soil there is, the more room there is for roots, better moisture retention and better storage of nutrients.
- For most annual plants, universal balcony flower soil is sufficient. From an ecological point of view, it is best not to use soil containing peat. Garden soil cut with ripe green compost, bark compost and sand also works well.
- When planting perennials, take into account the frost resistance of your plants.
- To protect biodiversity and your health, it is best not to use pesticides to maintain your garden.

Plant selection and planting

- Plants that love heat and dry conditions often manage to cope with the unnatural growing conditions on balconies, which are frequently south-facing,
- Put fast-growing species in an individual pot or surround them with other plants of similar growth,
- Species that grow tall can be damaged by strong gusts of wind. It is therefore best to plant them in containers sheltered from the wind,
- Most wild plants flower in early summer or midsummer. There are few late-blooming wild plants for balconies (however, if you cut the plant during or just after the first bloom, you will often be able to enjoy a second bloom),
- This type of planting ensures there is always something to look at throughout the seasons: some species disappear while others put on a show. Surprises are guaranteed!

Examples of plants

Goldmoss or white stonecrop, Lavender, Plants of the Alyssum genus, Butterworts (Pinguicula), Oregano, Savory, Sage, Lemongrass, etc.

For detailed lists of plants suitable for gardens, balconies and terraces, see "Find out more".



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