

Plantlife press release – No Mow May campaign launch

- Fresh polling demonstrates surging support for Plantlife’s No Mow May campaign
- Councils increasingly embracing the grassroots movement for wilder grasslands

Almost half (46%) of people intend to mow no more than once this May, reveals Plantlife as it launches its blossoming No Mow May campaign encouraging all to mow less and later for nature.

According to fresh polling (1) released today (30 April) a further 33% of respondents intend to mow once a fortnight, or every three weeks, demonstrating that the movement for wilder lawns and green spaces has firmly taken hold. Indeed, only 3% of respondents plan to mow more than once a week this May, and 18% on a weekly basis.

The polling reveals a key driver to less mowing to be a budding recognition of how the wild plants that light up wilder lawns support wildlife: almost three quarters (73%) of people now believe leaving lawns unmown for a month or more helps butterflies, bees and other wildlife. A whopping 84% of respondents consider it important to look after the environment and support conservation efforts - such as No Mow May - in their everyday life.

Sarah Shuttleworth, Senior Ecological Advisor, Plantlife, said:

“No Mow May matters massively because leaving lawns to just let it be(e) in May allows a wonderful array of wild plants to flower and flourish. This floral diversity provided by more relaxed mowing regimes provides a rich food source for a wealth of wildlife through the summer. Hang on a mo!”

Plantlife has spearheaded the grassroots movement for wilder lawns and green spaces and the message is cutting through: only 17% of poll respondents indicated that maintaining a neat and tidy aesthetic trumps providing support for garden wildlife (2).

Commenting on the poll findings, Ian Dunn, CEO, Plantlife, said:

“Support for Plantlife’s campaign is blossoming beautifully as people recognise the benefits to plants, people, pollinators and planet of mowing less and later for nature. The small act of giving the mower a month off, and then mowing less through the summer, can make a big difference at a time when we face interlinked climate and biodiversity emergencies (3).”

The public appetite for wilder lawns and green spaces is increasingly reflected by local authorities. More and more councils (4) are embracing Plantlife’s rallying call to park up the mowers in May as they look to create space for wild plants and other wildlife, and combat the climate crisis. Less frequent mowing raises floral diversity and lowers carbon emissions.

For the first time Plantlife has invited councils (5) to show their support for the biodiversity boosting campaign and the response has been hugely encouraging; over 40 have already signed up to join the No Mow May movement as part of a longer-term change to managing grassy road verges and green spaces for nature.

Andrew Doyle, Conservation Officer – Road Verges and Green Spaces, Plantlife, said:

“Experiencing the biodiversity benefits and cost savings a magical month of No Mow May brings in is a glorious gateway for councils to pass through en route to the more long-term wildlife-friendly

grasslands green space management our wild plants and fungi - and the ecosystems that depend on them - need to thrive, benefiting the local community and climate.”

The polling also revealed that men intend to mow more frequently than women: 5% of men indicated they will be mowing more than once a week this May compared with only 2% of women. This was mirrored by intention to mow weekly: 20% of men, compared with 15% of women. Overall, 70% of women indicated they will definitely or possibly participate in No Mow May in 2024, compared to 64% of men.

Boosting the profile of garden lawns and green spaces – as Plantlife’s No Mow May does so handsomely – is crucial against the backdrop of the alarming decline of grassland habitats.

Approximately 97% of wildflower meadows have been eradicated in less than a century and this has moved once widespread plants like Ragged Robin and Field scabious on to the Near Threatened list in England. With an estimated 23 million gardens in the UK, the potential for better managed grassland habitat – even if it’s just a small patch of lawn – is immense.

Explaining the value of a mixed approach to lawn management (6), Nicola Hutchinson, Director of Conservation, Plantlife, said:

“Variety really is the spice of life for lawns: different flowers provide different resources for different wildlife species; Clover on a short flowering lawn provides a lifeline for bumblebees, while longer grasses provide an essential resource for butterflies and moths such as the Small Skipper.”

Plantlife encourages nature lovers to No Mow May, but overall guidance does not suggest not mowing at all after May. No Mow May should be the start of letting the grass grow throughout the summer. Plantlife botanists recommend a balanced approach to lawn care throughout the year with collection of the cuttings. In order to boost lawn biodiversity Plantlife recommends a number of strikingly simple measures:

- Avoid using herbicides or fertilisers as these are both detrimental to many wild plants.
- Avoid using moss killer – lawn moss can help some wild plants establish.
- Allow plants time to set seed before mowing so they spread naturally.
- When you do mow remove grass cuttings to prevent nutrient build-up on lawns which will encourage some species, but be to the detriment of the majority of wild plants.

Ends

Images available for use with credit: <https://bit.ly/PlantlifesNoMowMay2024>

Notes to editors:

Plantlife urges gardeners and guardians of green spaces to not mow in May and relax mowing regimes through Spring and Summer for the benefit of wild plants, people, pollinators and planet.

- 1) Opinion Matters polling fieldwork was undertaken between 4-8 April 2024. Results are from 2006 respondents over the age of 18 who have lawns at their place of residence that they are able to manage.
- 2) 17% somewhat or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "prioritising wildlife support in my garden by allowing my lawn to grow more frequently is more important to me than maintaining a neat appearance through regular mowing"

- 3) The [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#) lists 44,000 species as being at risk of extinction, more than 28 per cent of the species that have been assessed.
- 4) <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/our-work/local-councils-and-no-mow-may/>
- 5) https://x.com/Love_plants/status/1776161121289838651
- 6) <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/your-no-mow-may-lawn-guide/>