



## **Plants for Bugs: Investigating invertebrate diversity in native and non-native garden plant communities**

It is generally accepted that some plants are better at supporting wildlife than others. However, opinions differ on the relative importance of native and non-native plants in the garden. Are natives best? How good are introduced plants at attracting invertebrates? Approximately 70% of plants in the 'average' garden are non-native so understanding their role is hugely important.

The Plants for Bugs project, based at RHS Gardens Wisley in Surrey, will try to answer some of these questions. Data will be collected from plots of three designs. Each plot will represent a garden border and be planted up with one of three plant groups: native (e.g. eglantine rose, *Rosa rubiginosa*), near-native (e.g. red-leaved rose, *Rosa glauca*) or exotic (e.g. *Fuchsia magellanica*).

Various sampling methods will be used to assess the richness of invertebrate species between plots - from ground beetles that roam under the plant cover, to caterpillars and other herbivores that eat the leaves and finally to flying insects such as butterflies that visit the flowers for nectar and pollen. As well as being of interest in their own right, this myriad of insects are also a link in the food chain for higher animals, such as birds and hedgehogs, so will be vital in determining how well our gardens support wildlife.

It is hoped that findings from this three year study will enable gardeners who wish to support biodiversity to choose plants with more confidence, backed by sound scientific advice from the UK's leading garden charity.

Visitors to RHS Gardens Wisley will be able to view the plots themselves from Summer 2009.

For more information about the Plants for Bugs project, contact [helenbostock@rhs.org.uk](mailto:helenbostock@rhs.org.uk)

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