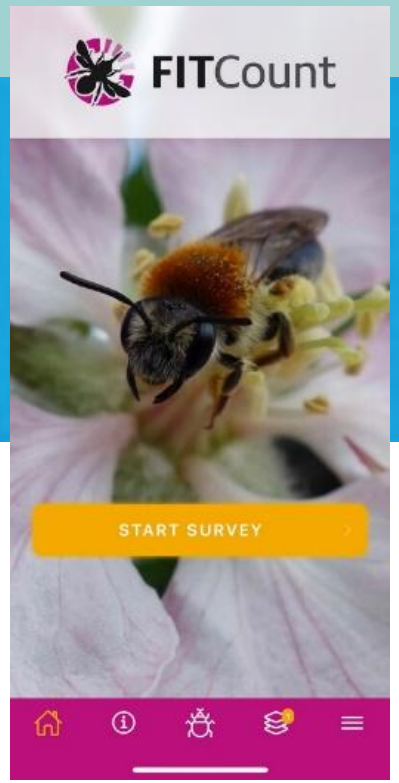
RHS

Plants for Pollinator Counts

Project annual report 2025 (Helen Bostock)

Background



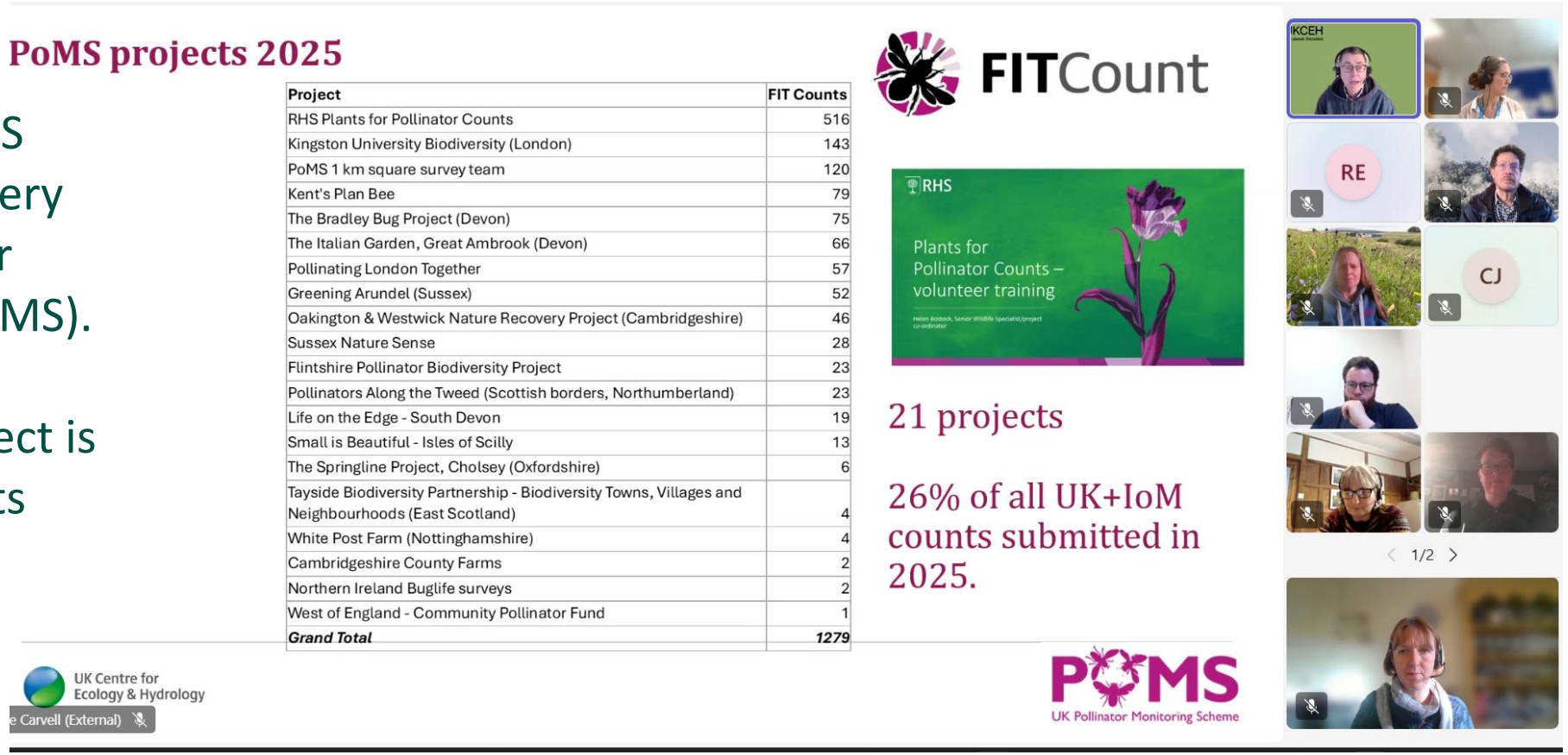
The **RHS Plants for Pollinators Counts** is a citizen science project that sets out to inform the **RHS Plants for Pollinators lists**. Surveys undertaken by volunteers at RHS gardens gather data on pollinating insects visiting flowers during a **10-minute survey called FIT (Flower Insect Timed) Count***.

*Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Joint Nature Conservation Committee)

rhs.org.uk/pollinatorcounts

Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) partner

In summer 2025 the RHS became an official delivery partner of the Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS). The **RHS Plants for Pollinators Counts** project is the largest of 21 projects around the country.



PoMS projects 2025

Project	FIT Counts
RHS Plants for Pollinator Counts	516
Kingston University Biodiversity (London)	143
PoMS 1 km square survey team	120
Kent's Plan Bee	79
The Bradley Bug Project (Devon)	75
The Italian Garden, Great Ambrook (Devon)	66
Pollinating London Together	57
Greening Arundel (Sussex)	52
Oakington & Westwick Nature Recovery Project (Cambridgeshire)	46
Sussex Nature Sense	28
Flintshire Pollinator Biodiversity Project	23
Pollinators Along the Tweed (Scottish borders, Northumberland)	23
Life on the Edge - South Devon	19
Small is Beautiful - Isles of Scilly	13
The Springline Project, Cholsey (Oxfordshire)	6
Tayside Biodiversity Partnership - Biodiversity Towns, Villages and Neighbourhoods (East Scotland)	4
White Post Farm (Nottinghamshire)	4
Cambridgeshire County Farms	2
Northern Ireland Buglife surveys	2
West of England - Community Pollinator Fund	1
Grand Total	***1279***

FITCount

RHS Plants for Pollinator Counts – volunteer training

21 projects

26% of all UK+IoM counts submitted in 2025.

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

e Carvell (External)

POMS UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme

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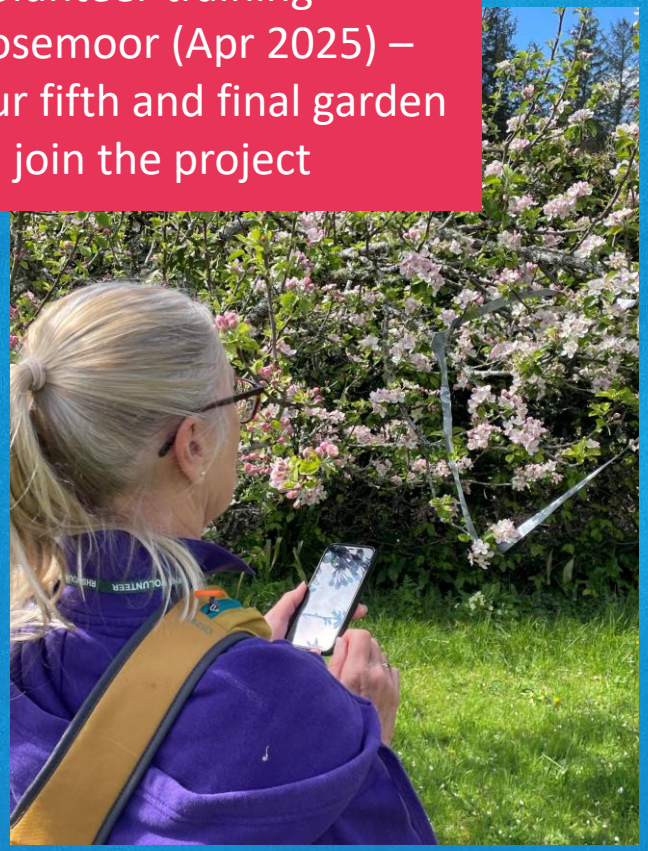
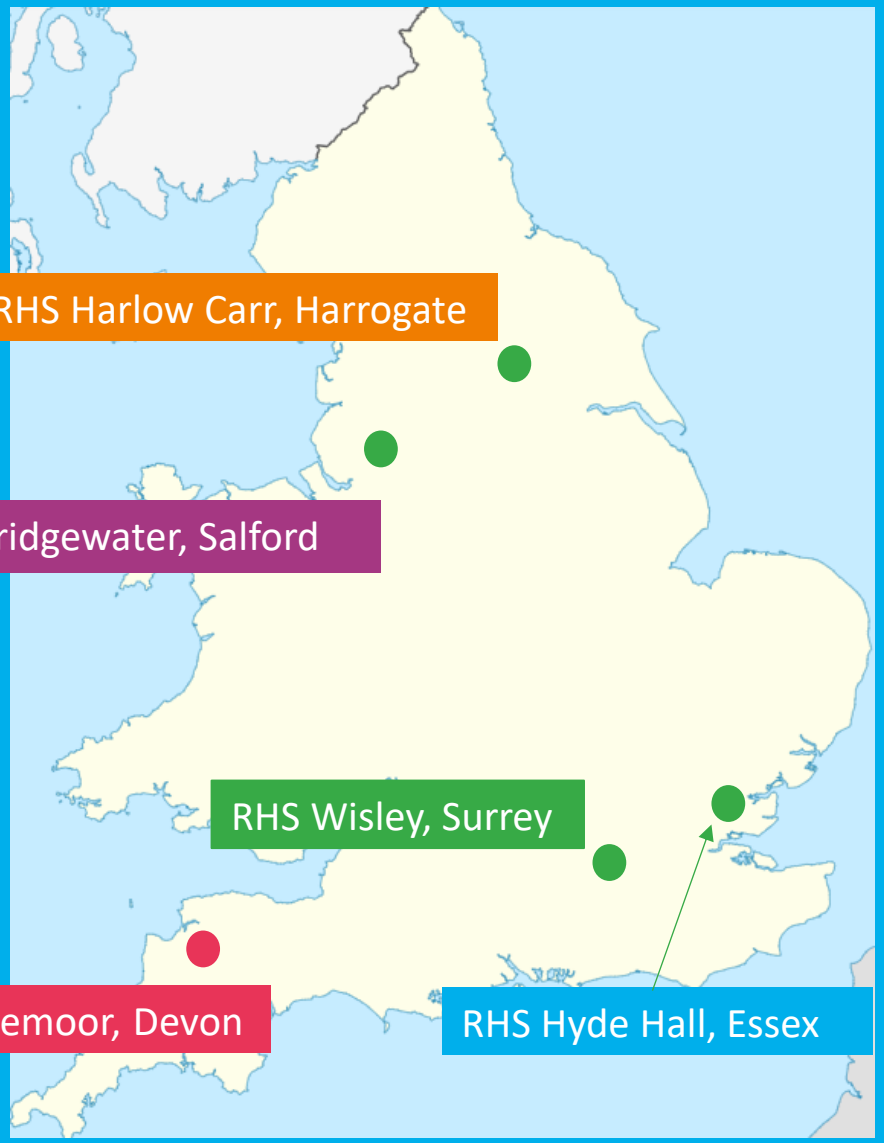
Training and outreach events 2025

Volunteer training Rosemoor (Apr 2025) – our fifth and final garden to join the project



Pollinator Discovery Day Rosemoor (Jul 2025)



I love being able to contribute toward the project aims, learning more about pollinators, meeting volunteers from other teams, being part of a team

Pollinator Counts volunteer

What we achieved in 2025…

5 RHS gardens participating
(Rosemoor from April 2025)

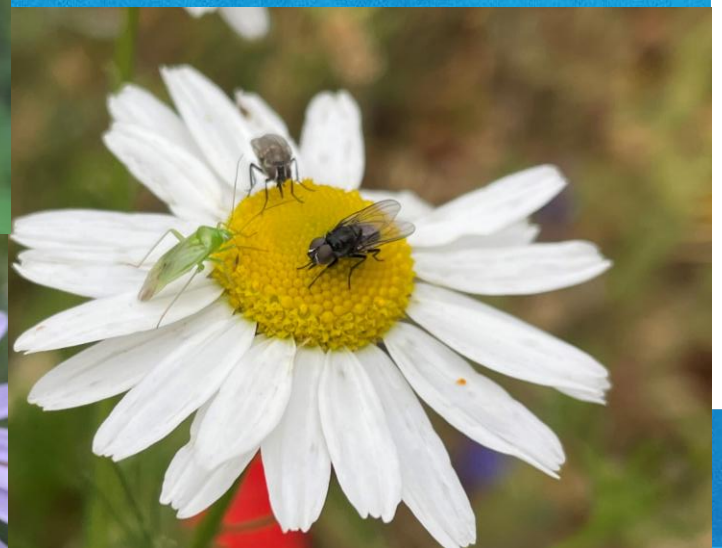
48 volunteers

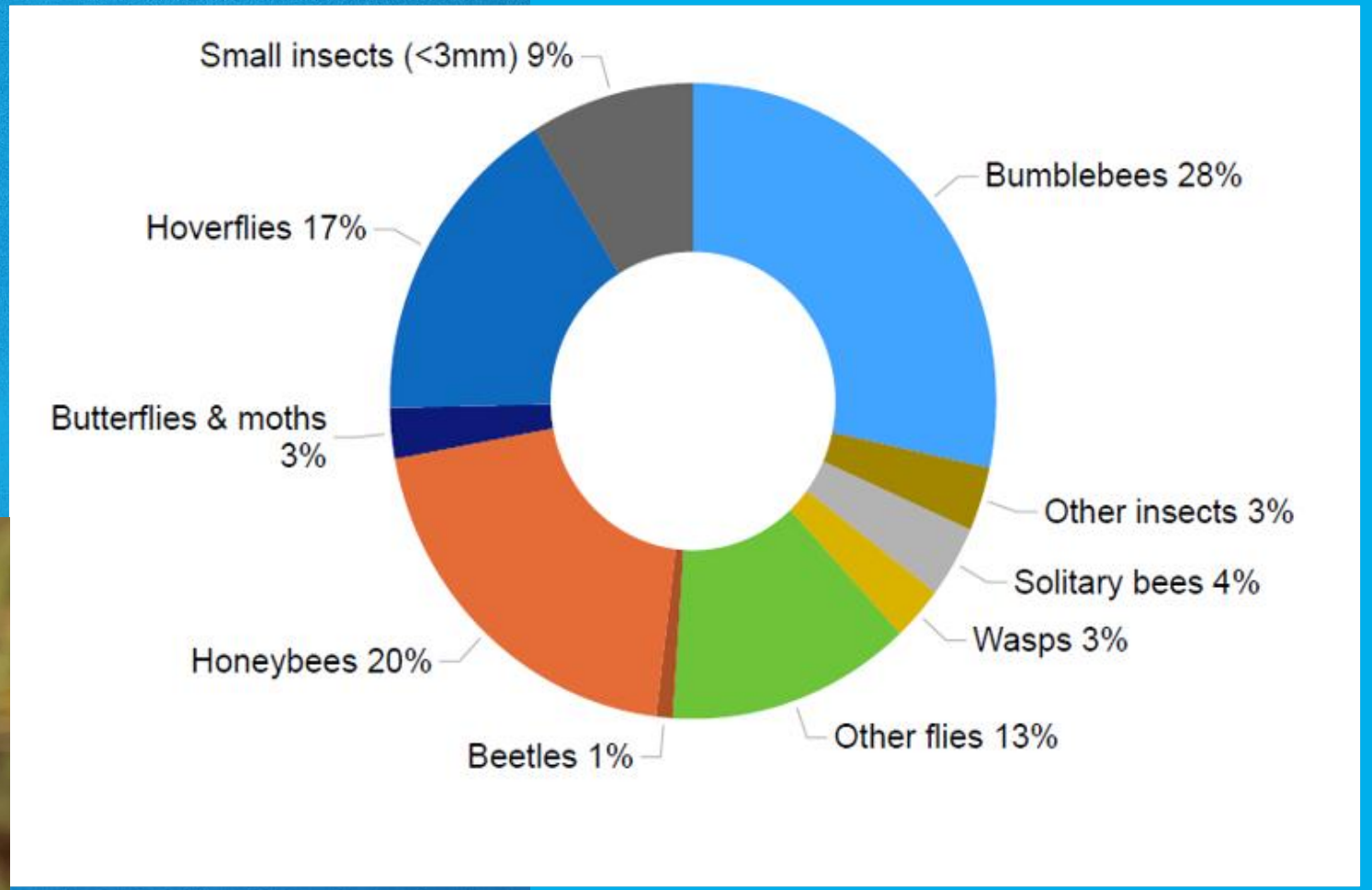
242 volunteer hours given

484 FIT counts completed

28 different plants surveyed
(14 benchmark plants [p10]; 14 target flowers [p19])

Total number of insects recorded: 4503





Breakdown by flower (selection)

This table shows the mean number of insects per FIT Count (number in brackets are number of counts)
C = combined records from 2024 + 2025 (other results are from 2025 records only)
Pollinator visits: <4 = LOW, 4-8 = MODERATE, 8-14 = HIGH, >14 = V. HIGH

Benchmark plant	Pollinator visits	Sample size	Target flower	Pollinator visits	Sample size
Allium 7.14 (28)	MODERATE	HIGH	*Acer* 3.78 (40) (C)	LOW	HIGH
Erica 5.67 (12)	MODERATE	MODERATE	*Aconitum* 6.44 (34) (C)	MODERATE	HIGH
Eutrochium 10.92 (39) (C)	HIGH	HIGH	*Berberis* 5.18 (55) (C)	MODERATE	V. HIGH
Geranium macrorrhizum 9.00 (36)	HIGH	HIGH	*Delphinium elatum* 3.29 (24) (C)	LOW	HIGH
Nepeta 13.12 (55)	HIGH	V. HIGH	*Hydrangea viburnoides* 15.84 (33) (C)	V. HIGH	HIGH
Salvia rosmarinus 4.94 (17)	MODERATE	MODERATE	*Ligustrum* 9.67 (33) (C)	HIGH	HIGH
Stachys byzantina 21.05 (20)	V. HIGH	HIGH	*Nicotiana langsdorffii* 4.69 (13)	MODERATE	MODERATE
Symphyotrichum 13.07 (55) (C)	HIGH	V. HIGH	*Phlox paniculata* 8.67 (48)	HIGH	HIGH
Verbena bonariensis 5.80 (88) (C)	MODERATE	V. HIGH	*Stachyurus chinensis* 3.52 (23) (C)	LOW	HIGH
			Thalictrum flacum glaucum 19.0 (17)	V. HIGH	MODERATE

Results - in early stages of analysis we can say…

- Three of our target flowers now have sufficient records with a High or Very High rating of pollinator visits for us to recommend they be confirmed as RHS Plants for Pollinators. Previously evidence was lacking. These three plants are;
  - *Hydrangea viburnoides* (climbing hydrangea)
  - *Phlox paniculata* (perennial phlox)
  - *Thalictrum flavum* subsp. *glaucum* (glaucous-leaved yellow meadow rue)
- The number of FIT Counts for the annuals (*Clarkia*, *Trachymene*, *Nicotiana*) were low or below the minimum for analysis so these will be sown again in 2026

Results - in early stages of analysis we can say…

- *Acer*, barberry and privet are being considered for raising to genus level (i.e. all species and varieties within that genus would qualify as RHS Plants for Pollinators (PfP)). The strongest case is for privet (*Ligustrum*) which has High pollinator visits and High number of records. *Acer* and barberry (*Berberis*) have fewer visits but flower earlier in the season when there are less pollinators about so care is needed to account for this seasonal variation. Records for benchmark plants that overlap in the same flowering period is also more limited. So it is likely we will roll these plants over to 2026 to gather further data.

Genus	No. of current species or varieties on PfP lists	No. of new species or varieties tested
Acer (maple)	5	5
Berberis (barberry)	3	3
Ligustrum (privet)	3	3

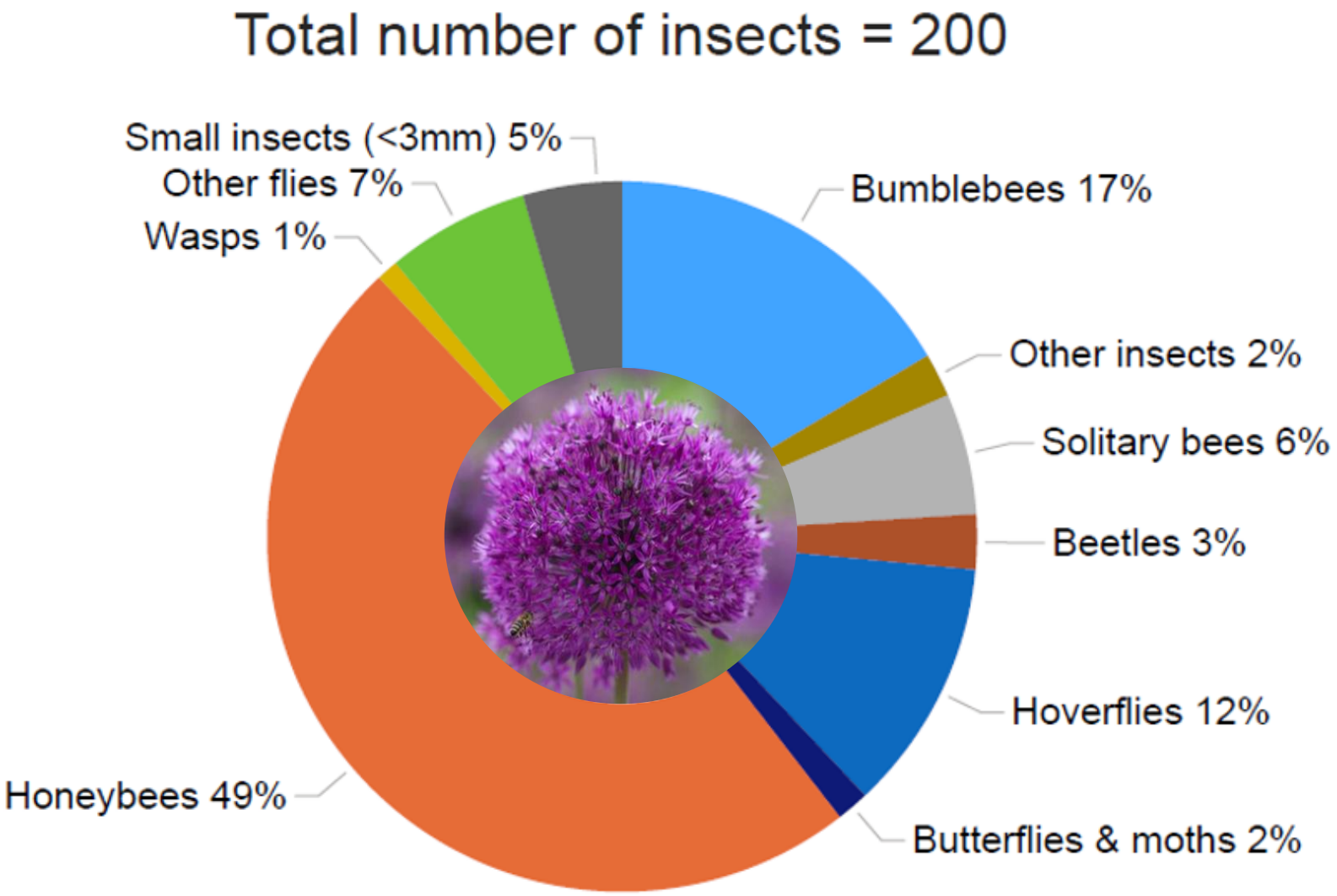
Benchmark plants

= plants on the RHS Plants for Pollinators lists with strong evidence of being good pollinator plants; by getting figures for numbers of insects visiting these we can use them to compare other plants of interest

The following slides show the mean number of insects per FIT Count (number in brackets are number of counts)

"Great idea to gather some evidence about how important plants are as pollinators and already realised that some may have tiny but vital windows."

Pollinator Counts volunteer (Wisley)



Allium ornamental onion
(benchmark plant)

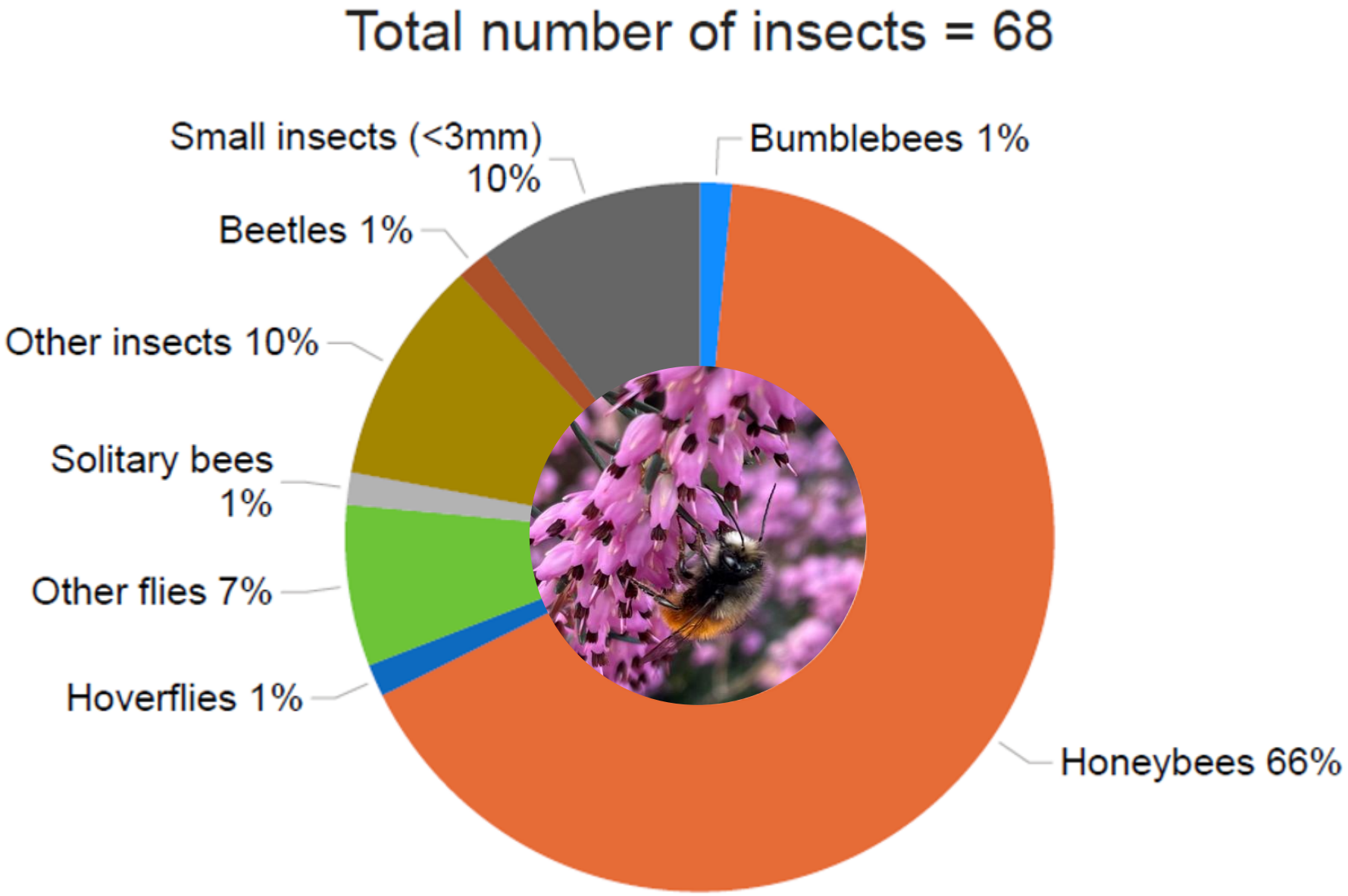
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

7.14

(28 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Honeybees
- Other bees



Erica heath (benchmark plant)

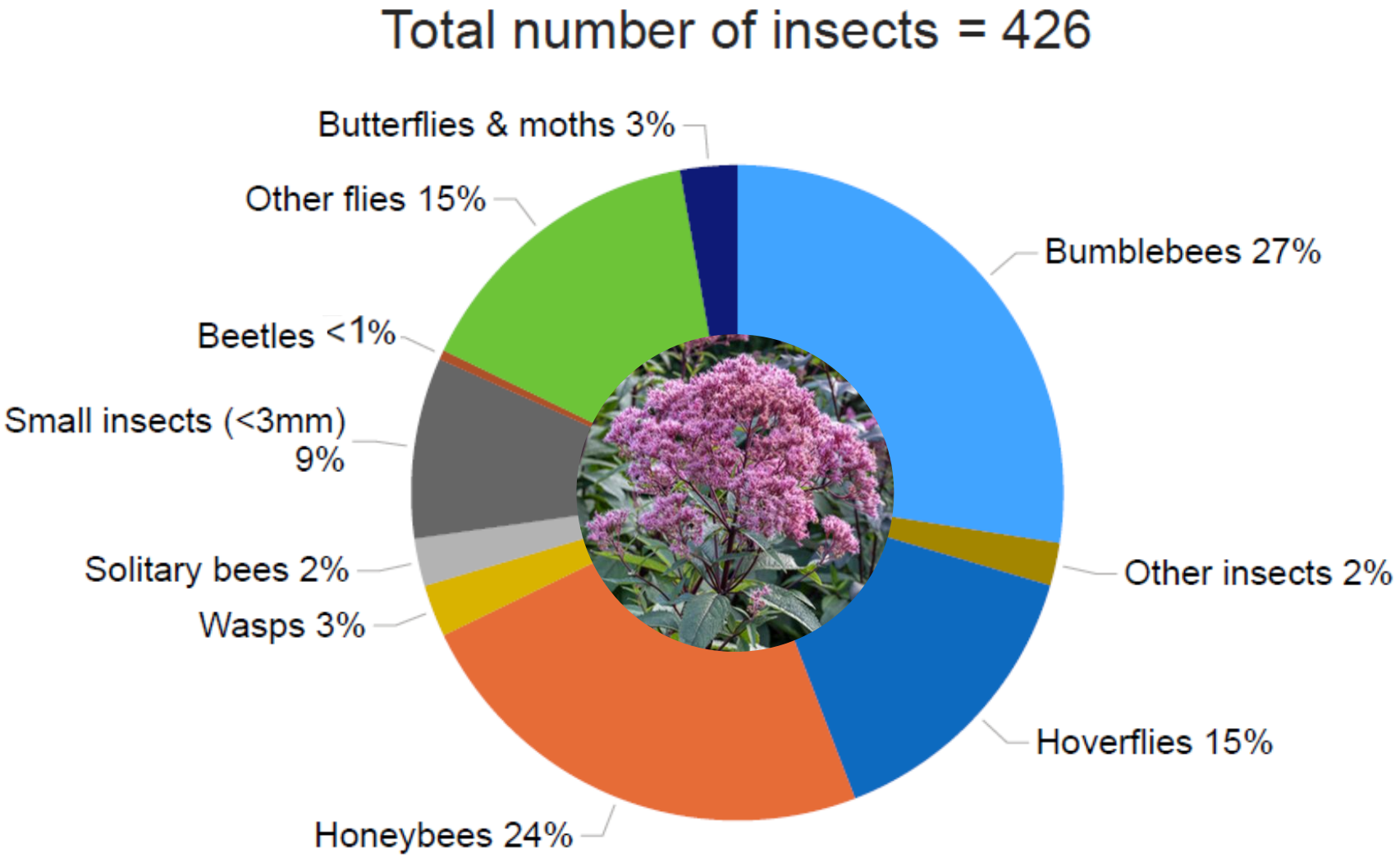
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

5.67

(12 counts)

Good plant for;

- Honeybees



Eutrochium
Joe pye weed
(benchmark plant)

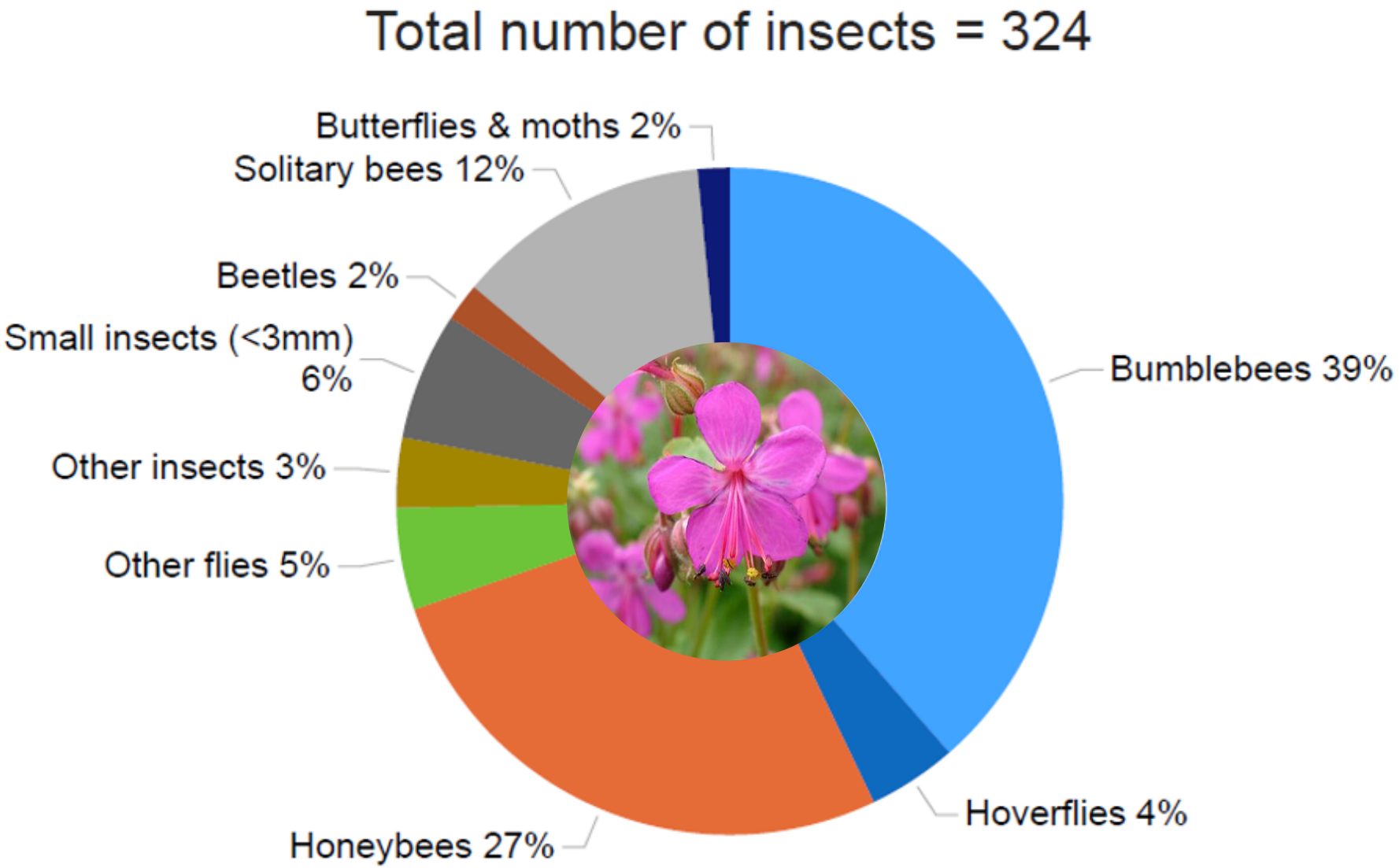
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

10.92

(39 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees
- Flies



Geranium macrorrhizum big-root cranesbill (benchmark plant)

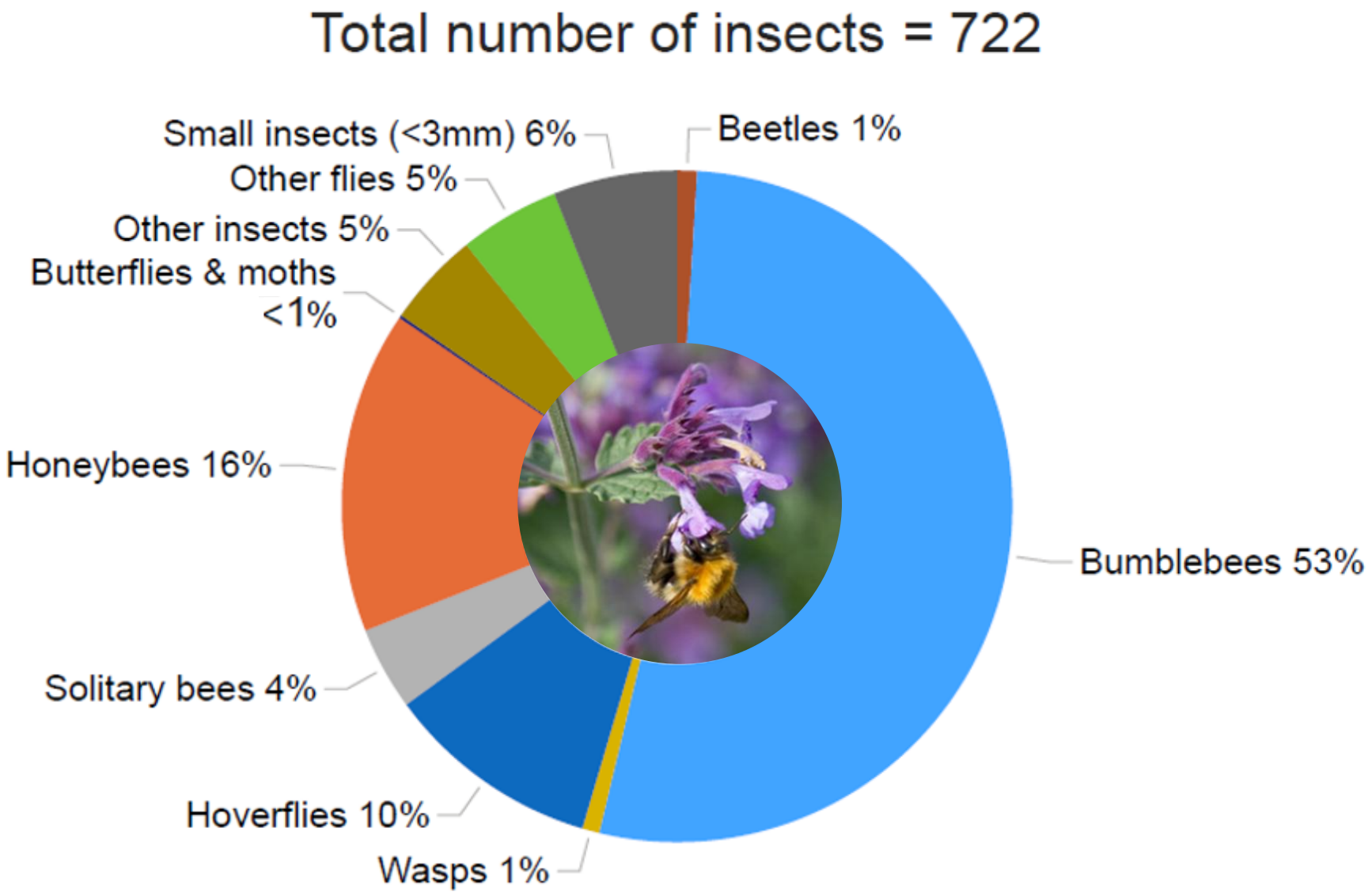
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

9.00

(36 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bees



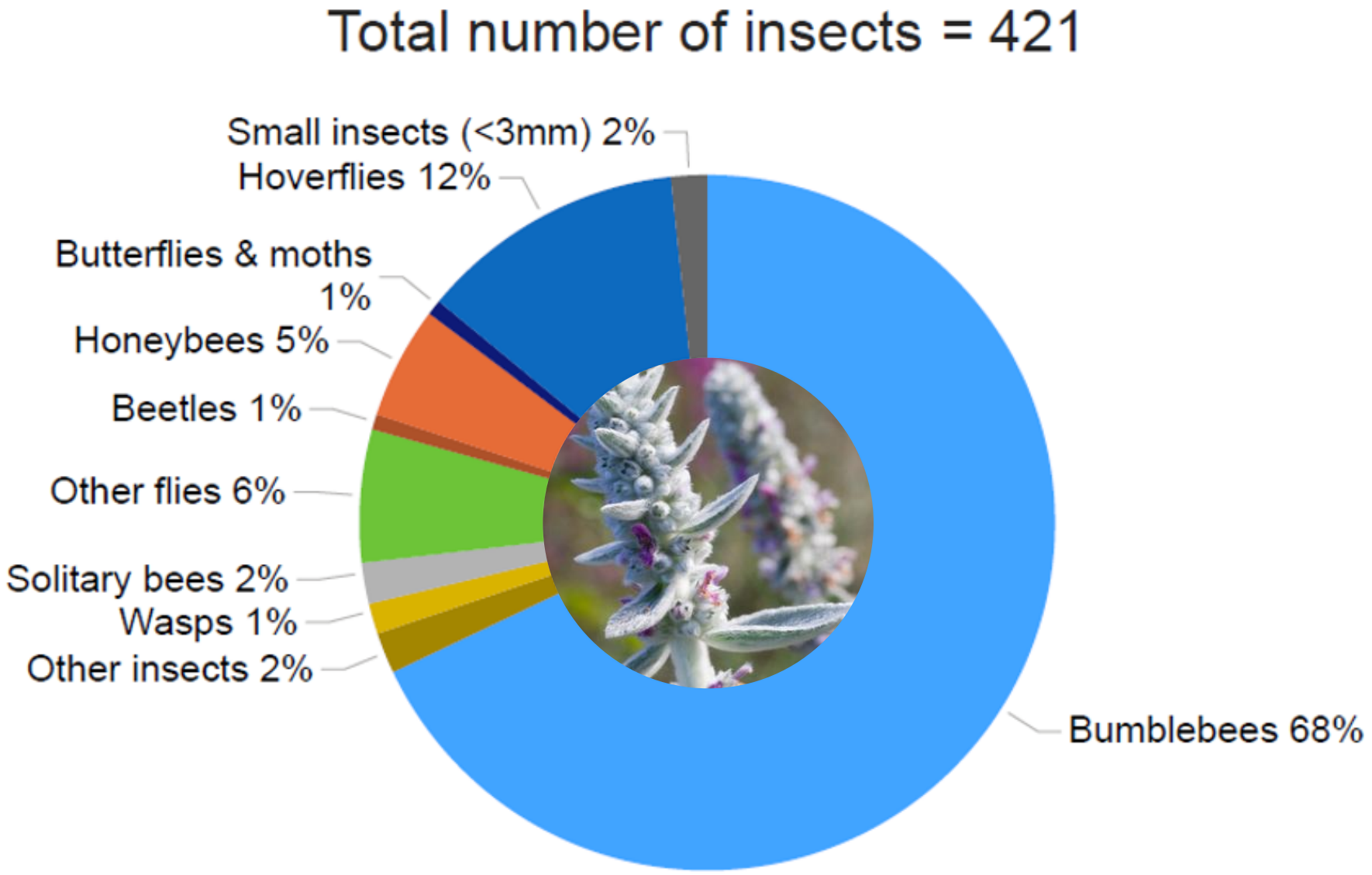
Nepeta catmint (benchmark plant)

Mean no. insects per 10 min count = **13.12**

(55 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees



Stachys byzantina lamb's ears (benchmark plant)

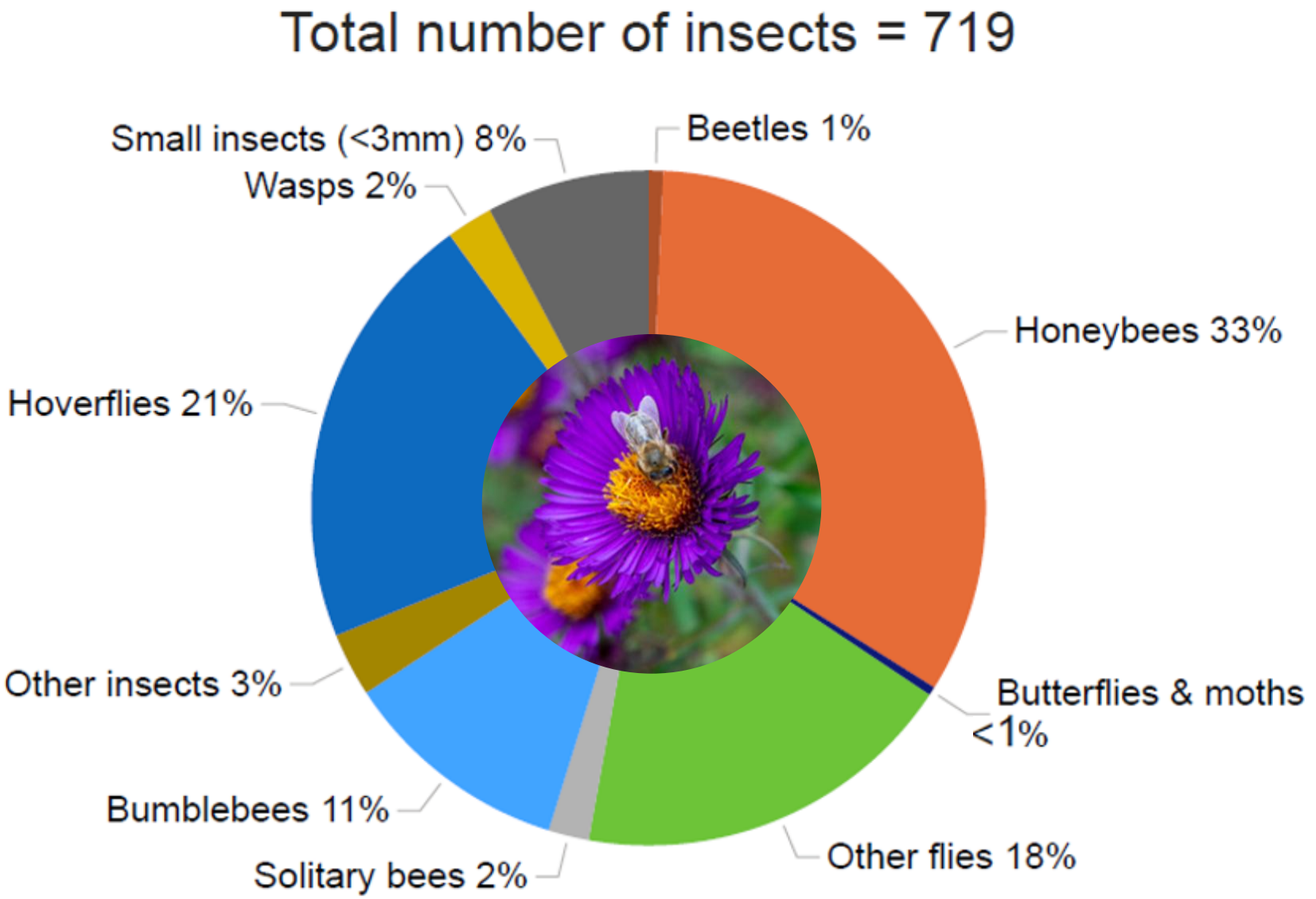
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

21.05

(20 counts)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees



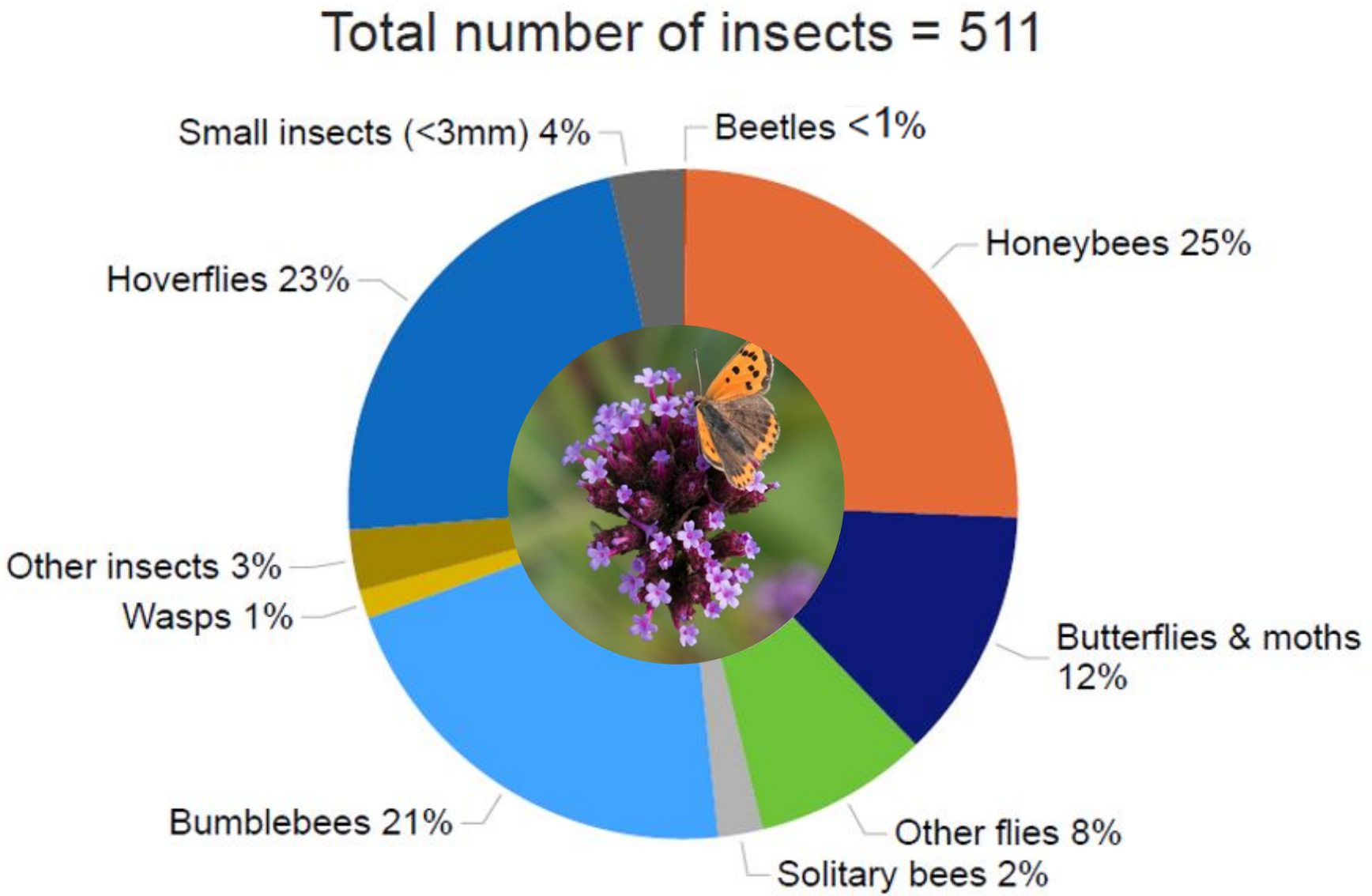
Symphyotrichum aster/Michaelmas daisy
(benchmark plant)

Mean no. insects per 10 min count = **13.07**

(55 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Honeybees
- Hoverflies



Verbena bonariensis purple top
(benchmark plant)

Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

5.80

(88 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Hoverflies
- Honeybees

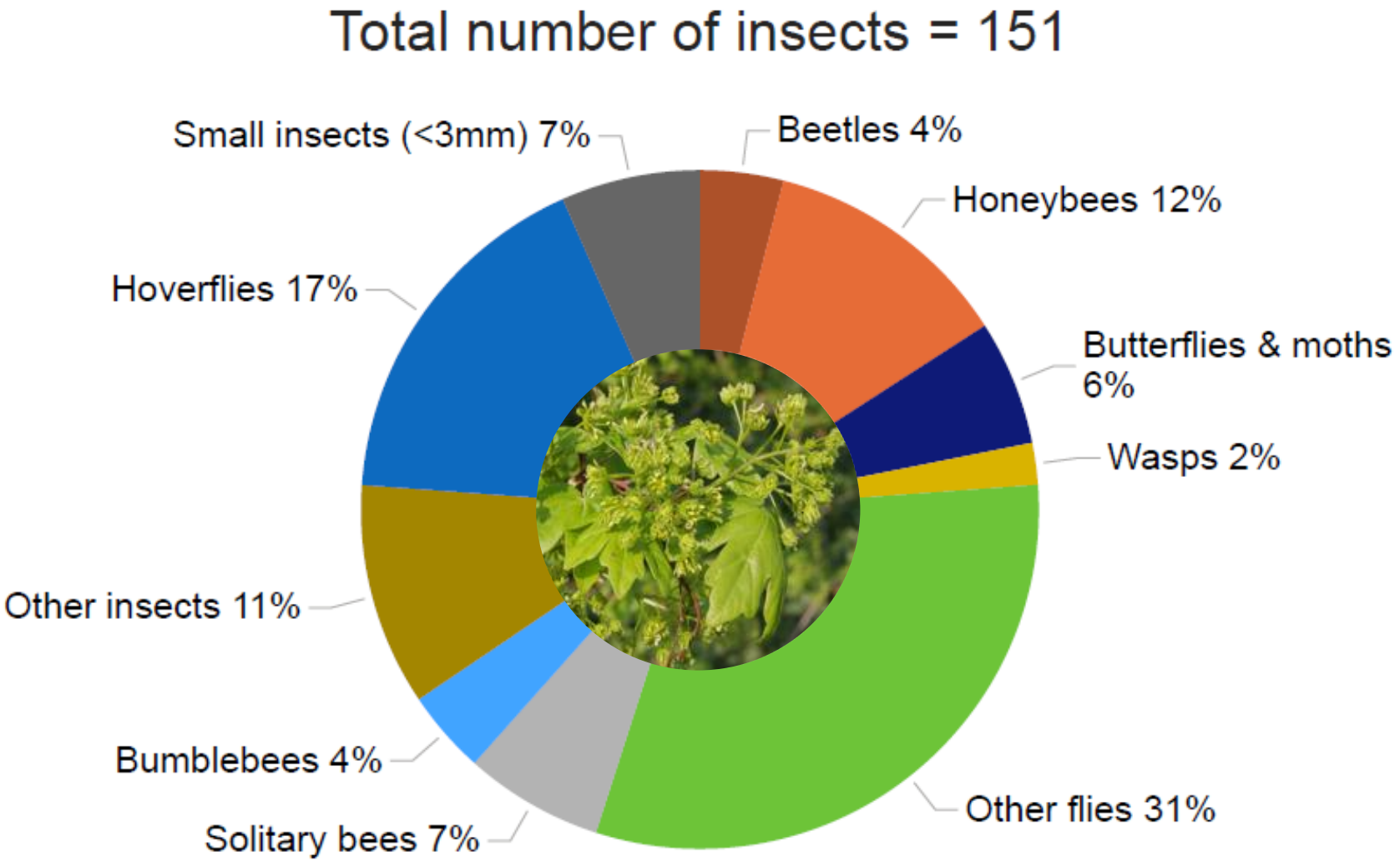
Target flowers

= plants we would like to gather more data on to decide whether to retain/add/amend on the RHS Plants for Pollinators lists

The following slides show the mean number of insects per FIT Count (number in brackets are number of counts)

"I'd recommend getting engaged in the project as it has made me more aware of the different types of pollinators in my own garden and the importance of having plants that attract them"

Pollinator Counts volunteer (Wisley)



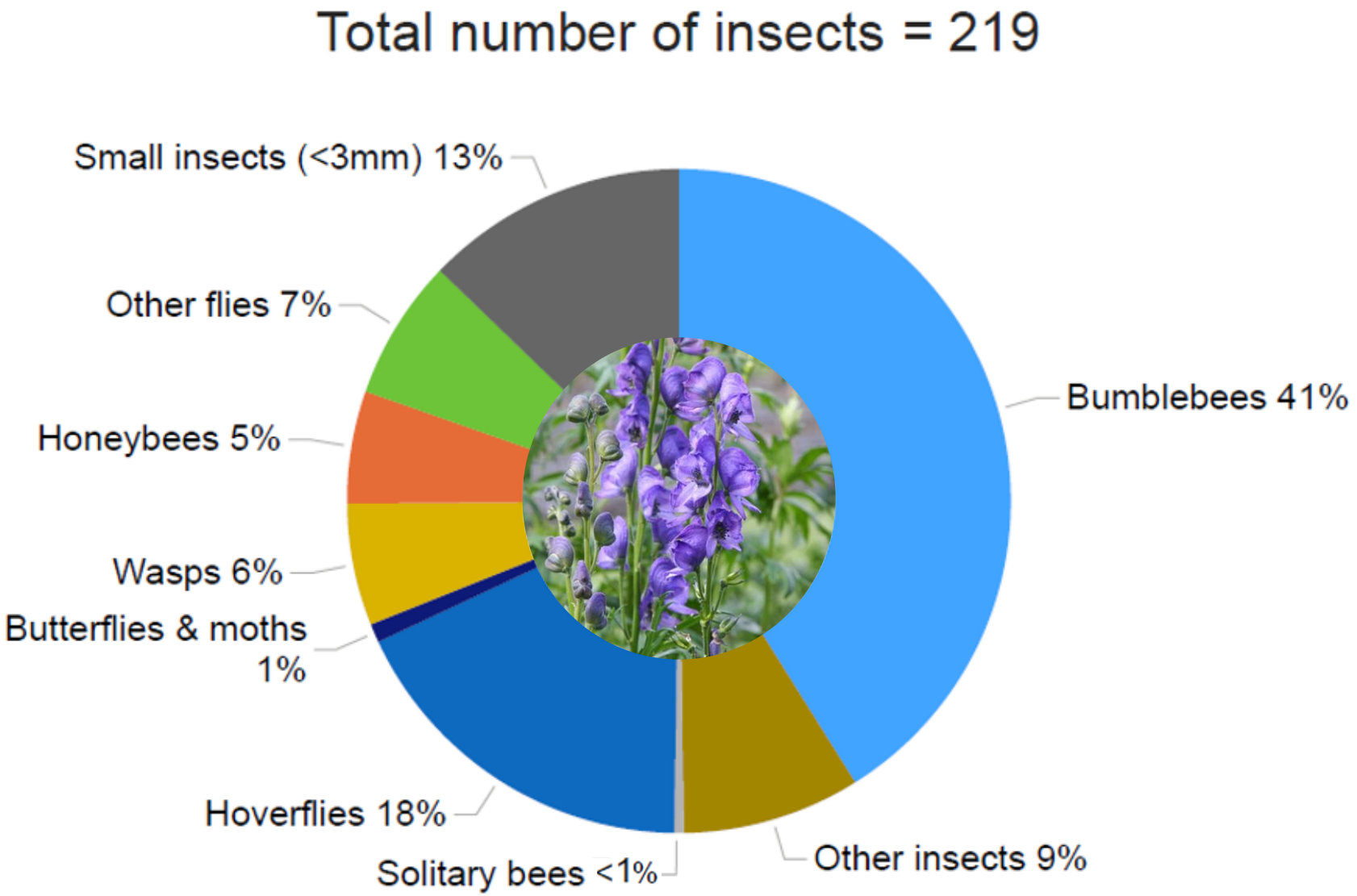
Acer
maple
(target flower)

Mean no. insects per 10 min count = **3.78**

(40 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Non-bee pollinators



Aconitum monkshood
(target flower)

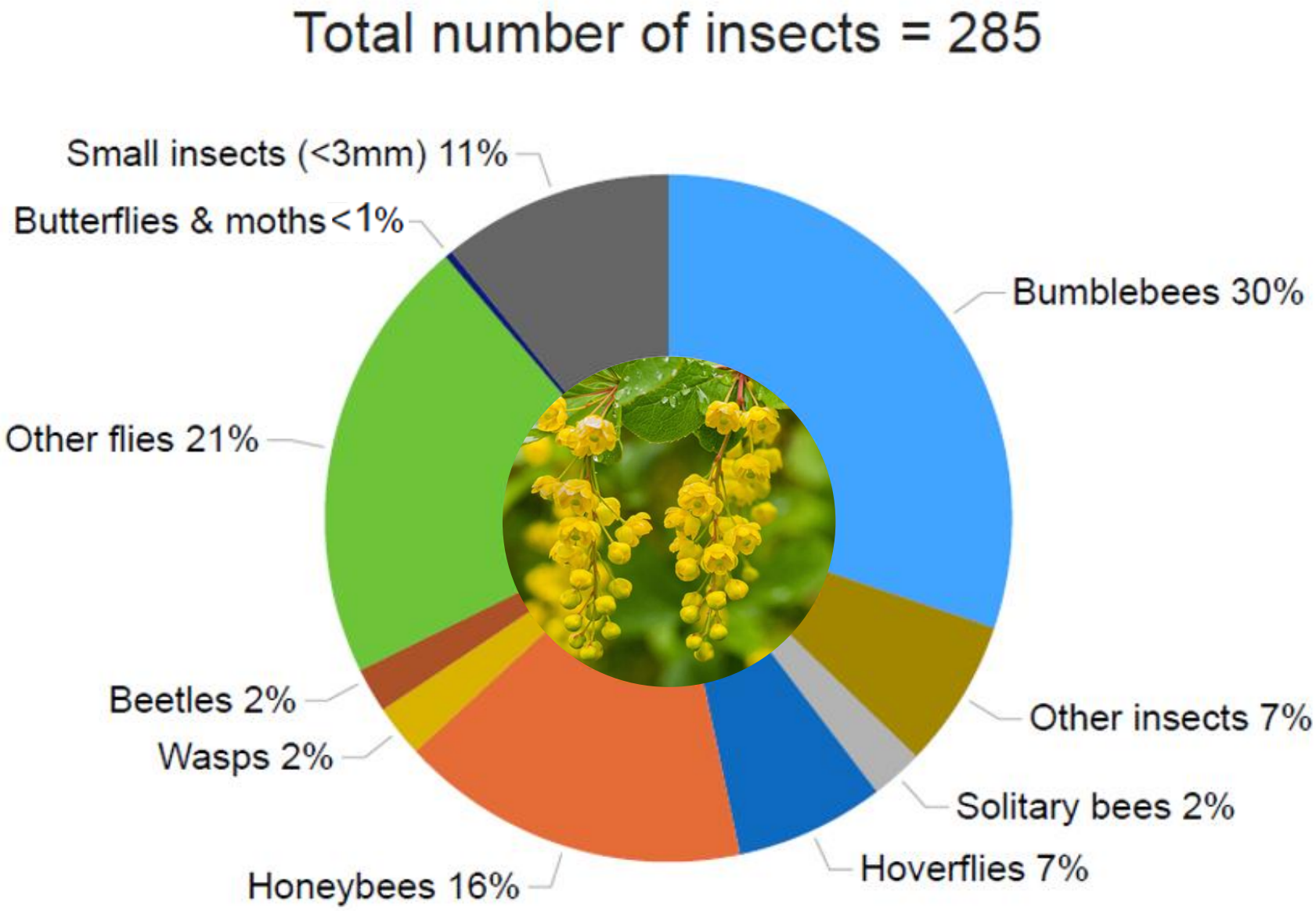
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

6.44

(34 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees
- Hoverflies



Berberis barberry
(target flower)

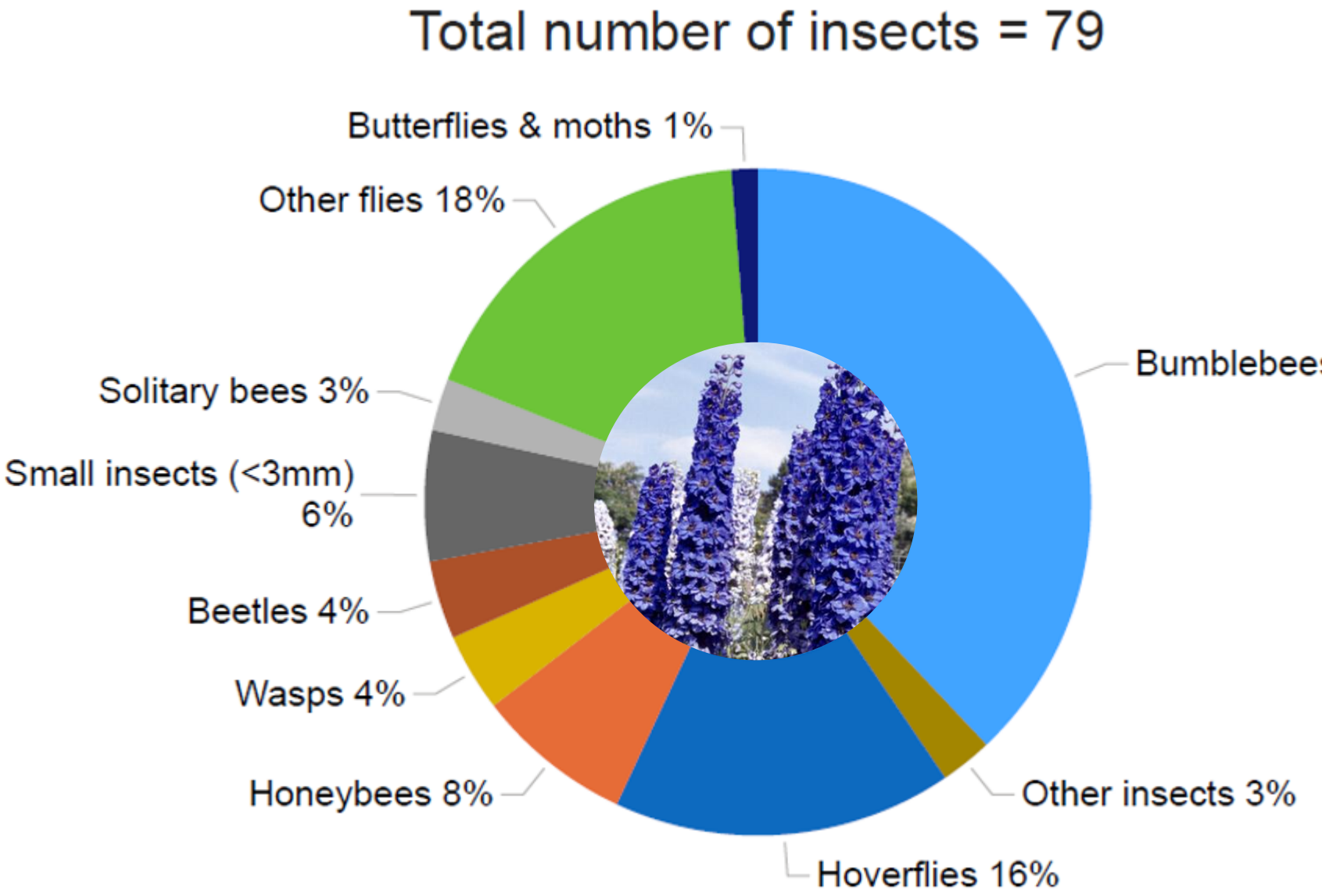
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

5.18

(55 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees
- Other flies



Delphinium elatum candle larkspur

(target flower)

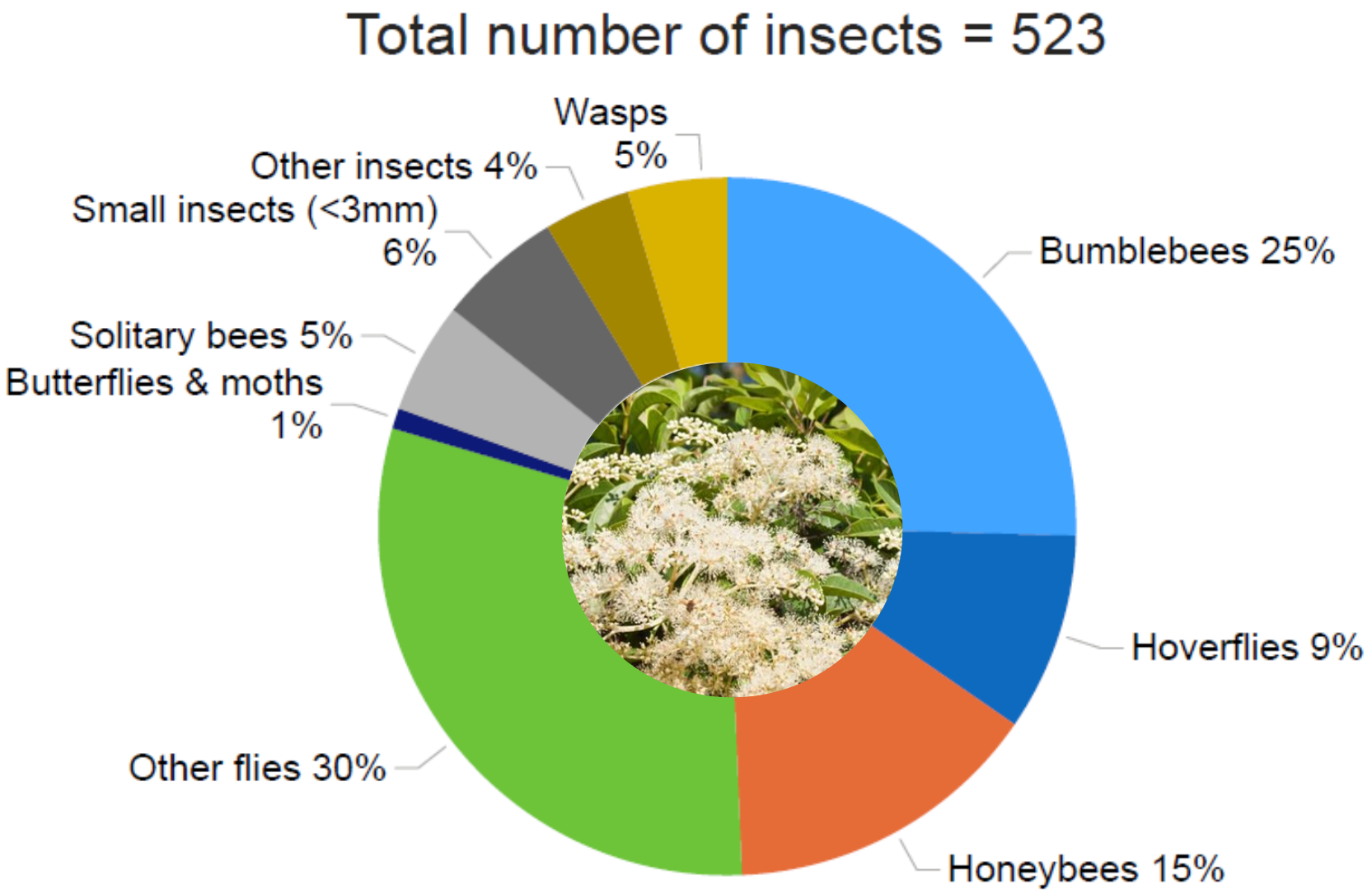
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

3.29

(24 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Bumblebees
- Other flies



Hydrangea viburnoides climbing hydrangea (target flower)

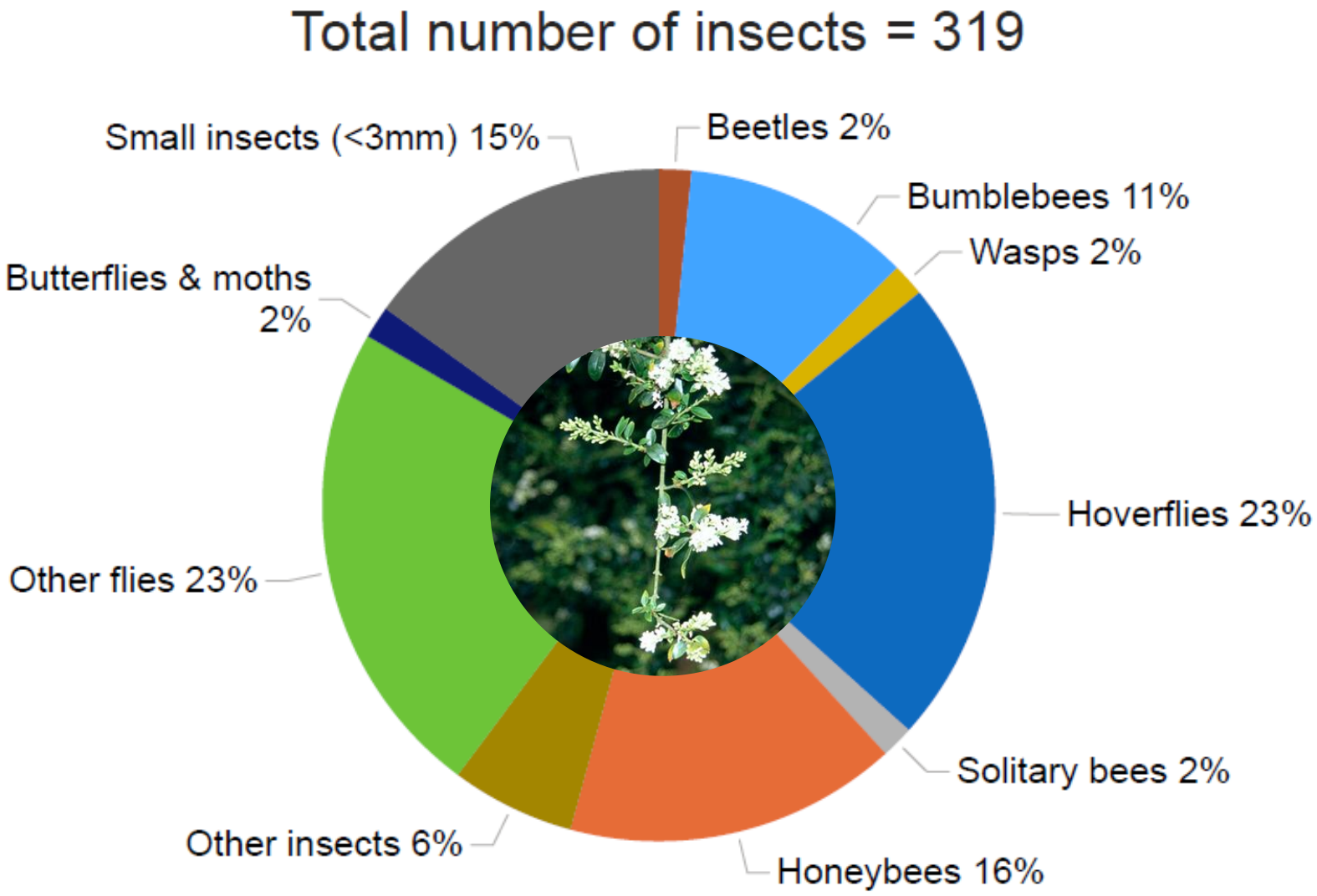
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

15.84

(33 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Other flies



Ligustrum privet
(target flower)

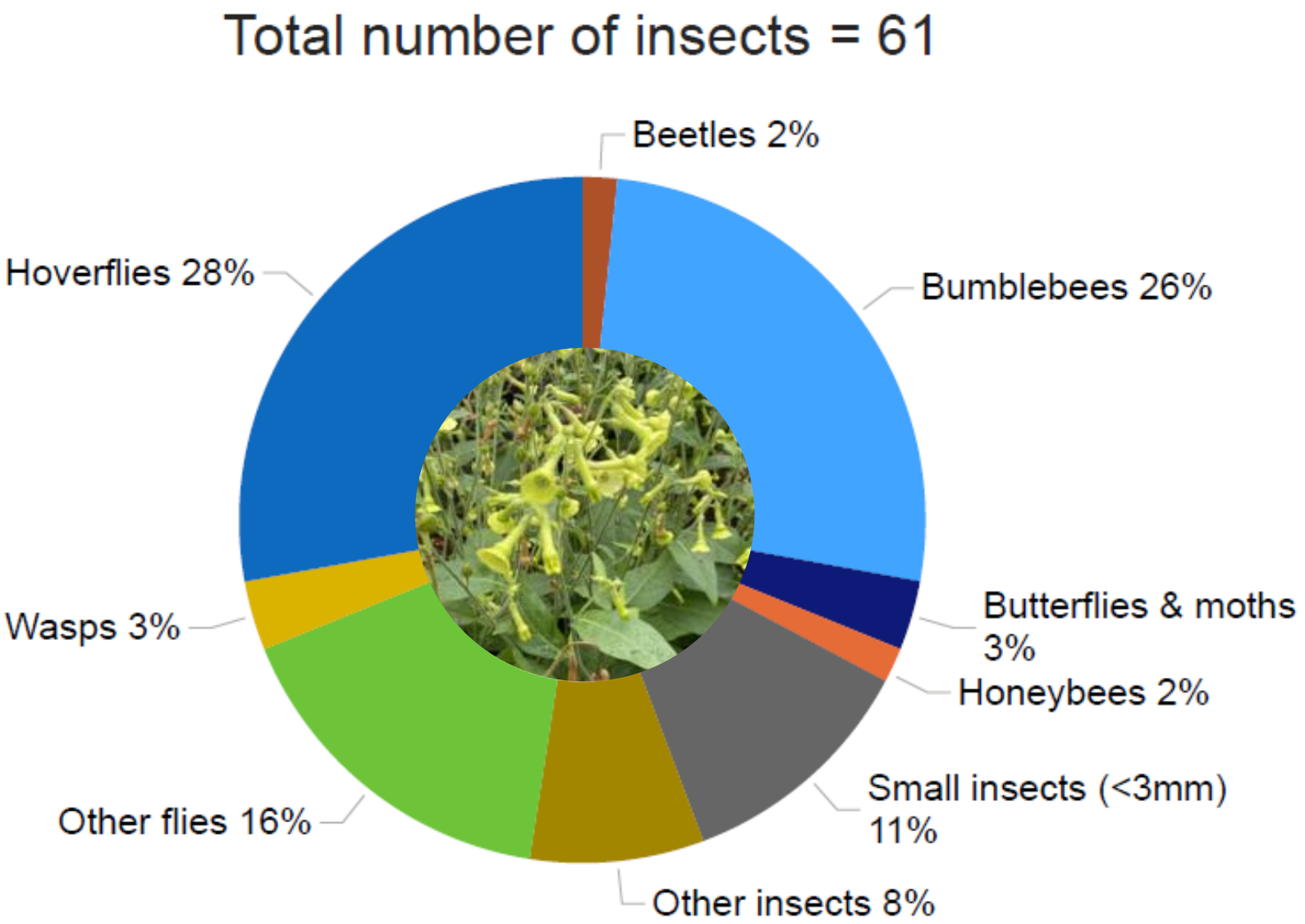
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

9.67

(33 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Small insects
- Other flies



Nicotiana langsdorffii tobacco plant
(target flower)

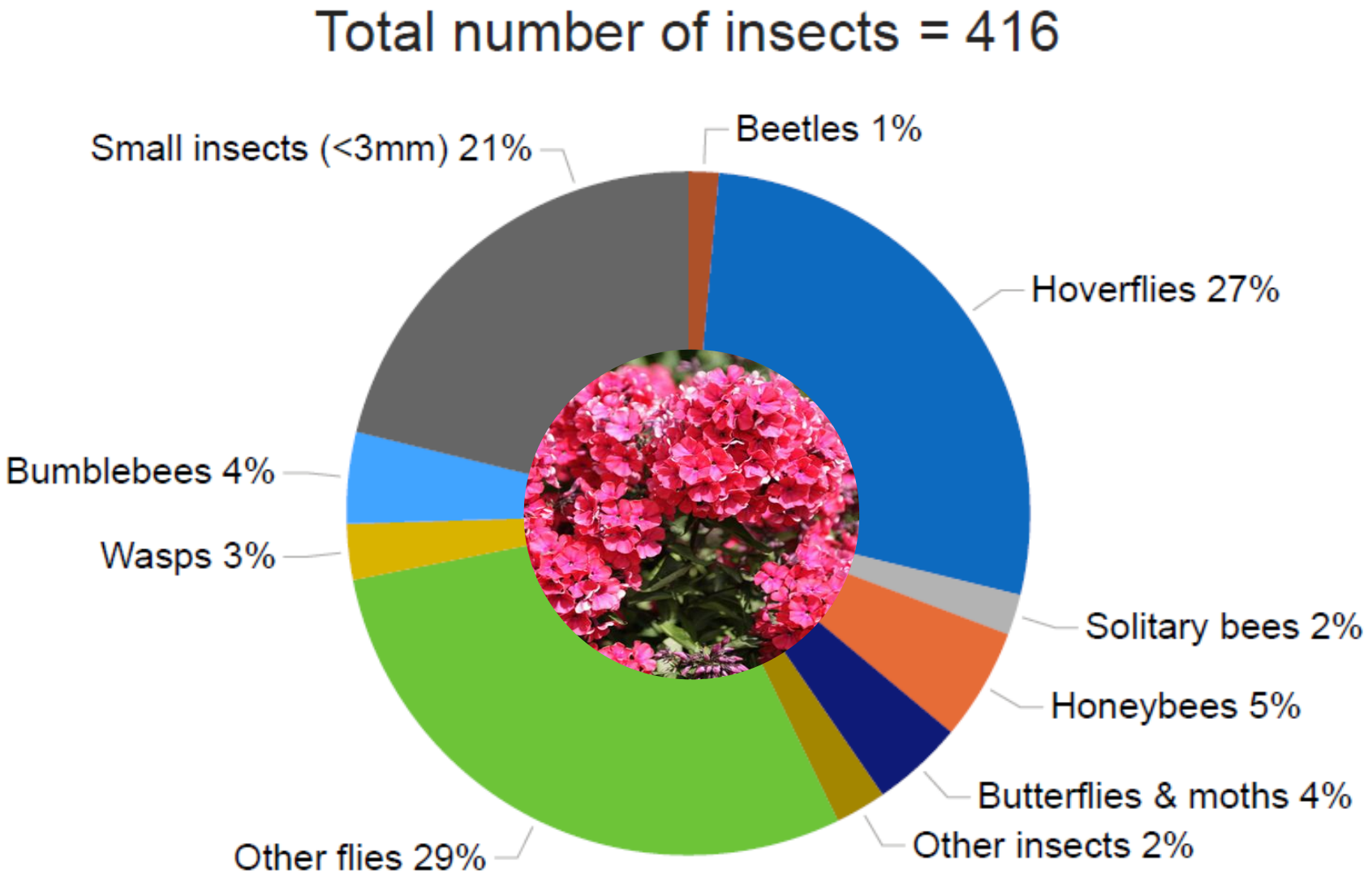
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

4.69

(13 counts)

Good plant for;

- Hoverflies
- Bumblebees



Phlox paniculata perennial phlox
(target flower)

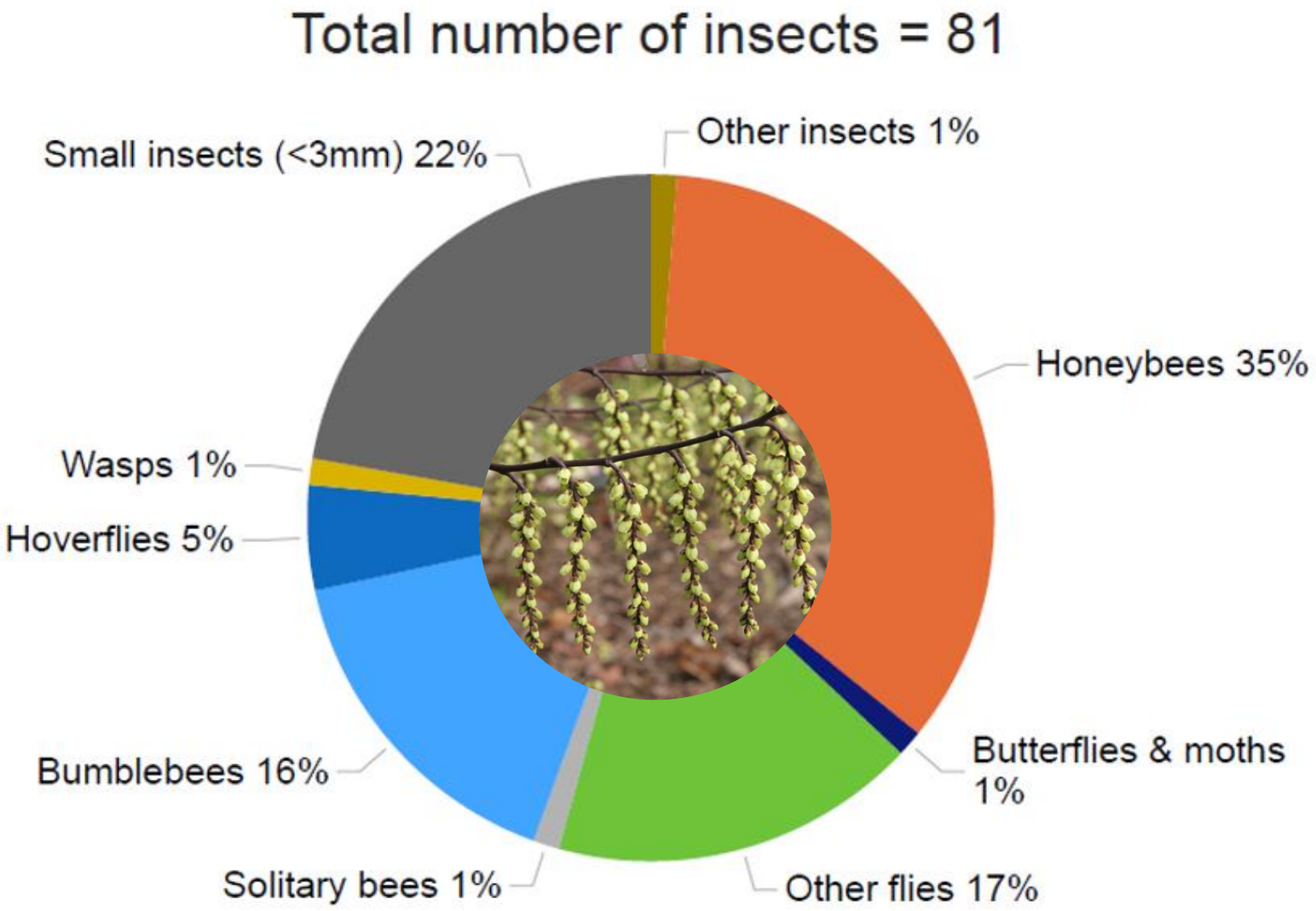
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

8.67

(48 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Other flies
- Small insects



Stachyurus chinensis
Chinese stachyurus
(target flower)

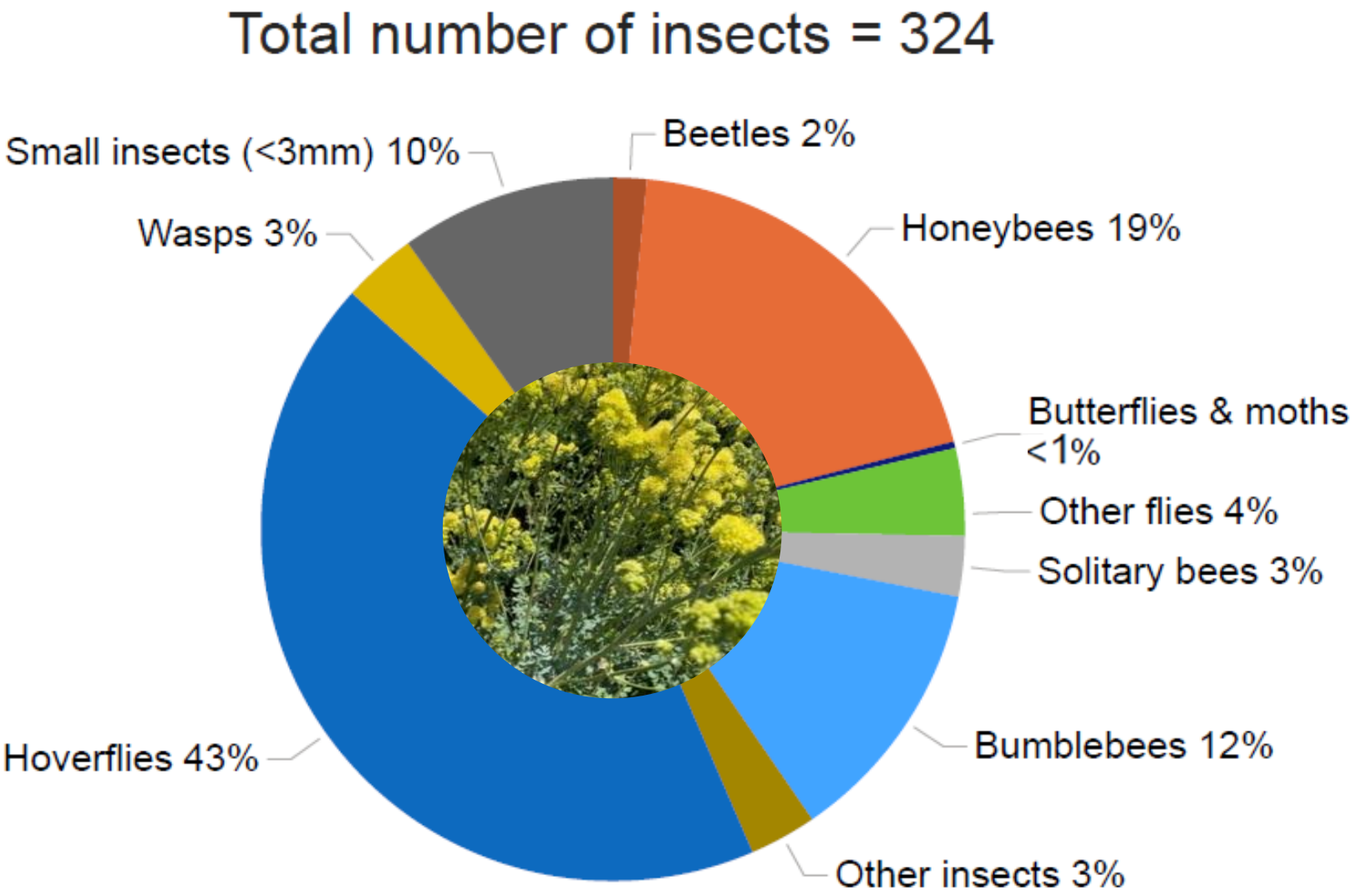
Mean no. insects per 10 min count =

3.52

(23 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Small insects
- Honeybees



Thalictrum flavum subsp. *glaucum* glaucous-leaved yellow meadow rue meadow rue

(target flower)

Mean no. insects per 10 min count = **19.0**

(17 counts – combined 2024/25)

Good plant for;

- Hoverflies

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to…

- All our incredible volunteers!
- Our Plant Record and Education staff – Jeanette Jones (Hyde Hall), Louise Grimwood, Jane Rowlands & Melanie Jones (Wisley), Carolyne Collins (Bridgewater), Kaye Collings (Harlow Carr), Bridget Wheeler (Rosemoor)
- Volunteer Team – Marie Weigand, Karly Jenkins, Lissa Davenport
- RHS scientists – Stephanie Bird, Josie Stuart, Andrew Salisbury, Fay Newbery, Yana Konoplin, Ruth Chitty
- The Pollinator Monitoring Scheme team at UKCEH – Claire Carvell, Robin Hutchinson, Martin Harvey

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UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology