

Sun Rising News

The twice yearly newsletter of
Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve



Summer 2009

Welcome to the natural burial ground's summer newsletter.

These words are written in mid August when, in many respects, the burial ground is at its most shaggy. Where the grass has not yet been cut this year, it is tall, dry, golden and seeding – and how wonderful it is to see all the different varieties of wild grasses, each growing to a different height, their seedheads shaped so differently. Few of the wildflowers are still in flower, the seedheads now heavy and brown, damp with the morning dews and late summer rains. With respect to the grassland not yet used for burial, the first hay cut was taken in early June and the grass is now a foot tall once more, moving in the breeze like waves on the sea. The first of the autumn colours are creeping in, with leaves just beginning to fall.

Though we aim to maintain a balance between human ideas of beauty and the natural cycle at Sun Rising, before the summer grass cut it can look rather wild. Visitors whose gardens are as lush with growth and flowers turning to seed, who walk the green lanes and bridleways and know what nature is like at this time of year, accept it with a smile. Certainly nature has a very different sense of order from we human beings.

Over the bank holiday weekend of August and during first weeks of September, if the weather is in our favour, we shall be cutting the grassy areas, and the wildflower areas that are no longer in flower.

Roses

Some of you will have seen how the roses planted around the Roundhouse beams flowered so beautifully this year. Following their initial reticence,

like most roses they are loving the clay soil and beginning to thrive. The ivies are still small, but establishing themselves deep in the mix of wildflowers around the Roundhouse.

In the autumn we shall be planting roses at the entrance of the burial ground. We've been waiting, considering what might do best by the gate to the lane; with the wild roses doing so well elsewhere at Sun Rising, we hope they will become a beautiful welcome at the gate as well.

The Wildflower Meadow

Last September, an area of rye grass to either side of the main track to the Roundhouse was sprayed out and seeded with a mix of wildflowers and grasses. The species were chosen as particularly suitable for the conditions found at the site, reflecting the flora traditionally found in the area.

While the mix has done well elsewhere at the site, such as around the Roundhouse, this larger area has proven harder. Agricultural seed dormant in the soil, notably beets, followed by yellow charlock (sketched here) and then wild carrot (with its white umbellifer flowers) also germinated, at times taking over much of the area. Though beautiful when in flower, and so full of butterflies and bees, they aren't ideal for a wildflower meadow. Consequently, we have removed a fair amount of these and will continue to do so, although in places this has left bare patches. These areas will be reseeded over the autumn and spring.

Knapweed, sorrel, red clover, oxeye daisies, cornflowers, poppies,



vetches, yellow rattle and other flowers did come through in places, and will we hope happily seed themselves for next year. Creating a wildflower meadow is such a



difficult but exciting project!

Greening Graves

In some areas the wildflower mix has taken on graves, indeed at times

quite overwhelming with a mass of growth and flowers (currently the yellow meadow vetchling). However in other areas, seeds have been slow to germinate, leaving graves a little bare for longer than we would have liked. Please bear with us as we explore what the best policy is in the long run, particularly in areas that will become woodland.

Bulb and Tree Planting 2009

We shall be planting just a small number of bulbs in October this year, so we aren't asking for volunteers. However, if you'd like us to buy bulbs to plant in specific areas of the burial ground, we will accept donations and can work with your wishes.

Our Tree Planting weekend this year is booked for **28-29 November 09**; NB: this is the week *before* we thought it may be. If you have ordered a tree, you will receive a letter in early October letting you know details and inviting you to attend. If you'd like to order a tree, let us know in good time, particularly if you will be wanting a plaque to go with it.

Feeding the Birds

A new idea for Sun Rising is the creation of a bird feeding station.

Bird species regularly found in woods and hedgerows are also regular visitors to garden bird tables and feeders. These include great tit, blue tit, coal tit, long tailed tit, tree sparrow, greenfinch, goldfinch, chaffinch, siskin, woodpeckers, nuthatch, collared dove, robin, blackbird, song thrush and dunnock.



Until recently it was believed that it was only necessary to feed wild birds during the winter, as there was plenty of food for them at other times of the year. However, studies have shown this isn't the case. Providing food during the summer is just as important as in the winter. Feeding birds during the spring and summer provides food for fledglings; this has become more important with modern farming practices (in particular year-round crop production). A decline in the population of many insect species has led to food shortages during this vital period.

Another reason to continue feeding birds throughout the summer is that some species, such as blackbirds, continue to raise families until late in the year - sometimes raising up to 5 broods in one season!

One of the first important books on environmentalism, Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' (1962), spoke of the loss of bird species due to the use of agricultural toxins. Birds enrich any environment and we believe that a feeding station will be a real asset to Sun Rising and benefit the local bird population.

As the natural burial ground evolves, wildflowers, shrubs and trees being planted will provide seeds and insects for a range of bird species. However, in the short term, we would like to create a bird feeding station made up of a few large bird feeders that will help to support the local bird population.

If you would like to donate a bird feeder in memory of a loved one, we would be happy to provide details. There will also be an opportunity to sponsor one of the feeders or make a donation towards bird seed.

The sketch here is a yellowhammer, seen at Sun Rising over the summer. Another seed-eating songbird whose population has reduced by 50% over the past 25 years, it's wonderful to have them at the burial ground!

Nature Reserve Burial Grounds

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