

KL1

Ponds

By offering a different habitat, ponds are one of the easiest ways of increasing the diversity of wildlife. We counted fifteen ponds [with a further one almost drained, but still a damp place]. We saw newts, and several plot-holders spoke of having tadpoles [which were often eaten by the newts]. On one plot the tenants had just removed a small pond, as they were very aware of the risk to their toddler; this was a useful cautionary reminder. The good news was that the pond was about to be transported to another plot.

Boundary walls and fences

We thought that the perimeter of a site might offer potential for further wildlife habitats – perhaps in those quieter, slightly scruffy ends of a plot, behind the shed or bean pole collection. We walked the boundary, noting where there was already wildlife-friendly growth, such as a hedge, tree or brambles. We also looked out for stretches of boundary that were bare of green stuff, and assessed if this had potential.

We found there were two types of boundary barrier:

1. Hedges - these were either of the 'English Hedge'/'Scruffy Hedge' type, or a wire fence also with a hedge. Both were almost stock-proof apart from the odd deer or badger hole.
2. Brick or stone walls



The perimeter of the site is bound by approximately:

- 303m of wall
- 192m of hedge or fence with hedge. All of this was mature hedgerow, undoubtedly providing nesting shelter, flowers for pollinators and food for birds.

This totals around 495m of boundary.

The area is estimated to be 1.2 hectare (3 acres)

Total number of various sized plots: 75.

We soon realised that the brick or stone walls [some of which are 'listed'] need clear access for maintenance, and so do not have the potential that we had first considered i.e., it would be unwise to plant hedges or climbers on or near these walls. Continued valuing of the existing hedges would be a good commitment.

On our tour we spotted a couple of nesting boxes on the boundary walls; useful additions to the walls, without harming the structure.

Fifteen ponds are an excellent contribution to biodiversity, and the encouragement of more ponds on tenant's plots would be a simple first step.

Just outside the boundary the site has good tree cover to the North and in the woodland area to the North-West.

In "The Annexe" is a low-lying and thus damp plot of no use for conventional growing. However, it is actively being managed for wildlife. It is a useful reminder that there may be similar 'rough patches' on other sites.

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