

Green Gym



Sonning Common



"THE LOPPER"

Full of little cuttings.

Lockdown Bluebell Special



I hope everyone is well and keeping safe, and enjoying the sun and great outdoors as much as possible.

Many thanks to everyone who has sent in all the lovely photos of Bluebell, so many in fact we have enough for a Bluebell special edition of the Lockdown Lopper. Hope you enjoy it.
--martin b--

Interesting Bluebell facts

Around half the world's population of these iconic wildflowers grow in the UK

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, bluebells are protected and if you dig up and sell a wild bluebell you can be heavily fined.



The first bluebells are believed to have appeared in Britain after the last Ice Age.

It takes at least five years for a bluebell seed to grow into a bulb.

There are rare 'albino' bluebells which are white as they lack the blue pigment.

Bees rely heavily on the flowers' nectar in the spring but sometimes they 'steal' it by biting a hole in the bottom of the bell.

During Queen Elizabeth I's reign, the big ruff collars were stiffened using starch made from the crushed bulbs of

bluebells.

During the Bronze Age, feathers were stuck on arrows using the sticky sap from bluebells.

The gummy sap was also used as glue for bookbinding. As the sap is so toxic, it stopped certain insects from attacking the binding.

Bluebells were said by herbalists to help prevent nightmares, and were used as a remedy against leprosy, spider bites and tuberculosis.



Photos of Grey Court by Julia

Bluebell Folklore



There's an interesting belief that wearing a garland of bluebells will induce you to speak only the truth.

The Bluebell is a tool used for calling fairies. "Ring" the bluebells like you would a normal bell and the fairies would come. But the downside is - if you actually hear it ring, it's a superstition that someone that holds dear to your heart will die. The question is, what sound does a bluebell have? Unfortunately no one ever heard one yet!

Bluebells, those denizens of ancient forests, are fairy flowers, used by fairies to trap humans who encroach on natural places. If a child picks a bluebell in a bluebell wood, he will never be seen again. If an adult picks one, he will wander lost, led astray by pixies forever, or until someone rescues him.

Bluebells may be used in love spells. Turn a Common English bluebell flower inside out to ensure you will win the heart of the one you desire.

The most popular meaning for bluebells is humility or sometimes gratitude. It is also associated with everlasting love and constancy. Bluebells are also called harebells in Scotland because it is believed that witches turned into hares and hid among the flowers.



Bluebells are among the first flowers of spring and so represent rebirth. They may be

planted on gravesites to comfort mourning visitors and represent the rebirth of the dead.



To dream of bluebells means that unfortunately you are married to a nagging spouse, but that happily your relationship is also passionate.

Photos of Nettlebed Common and Park Wood by Susan

Bluebells in nature

The bluebell is present everywhere in Britain except Orkney and Shetland, and its range extends across western Europe from central Spain to the Netherlands. The UK contains almost 50% of the world's population of bluebells; although they are threatened by habitat loss, a number of large-scale planting schemes are helping to combat the decline.



As well as habitat loss, over eager collection by enthusiasts, the invasion of Spanish bluebells with which the common bluebell hybridizes readily, and the muntjac deer which finds them delicious, also cause concern for the UK's wild population of bluebells.

Climate change is also emerging as a concern for the future of this species as the changing climate is causing it and other plants in its environment to leaf and flower at different times, causing changes in light patterns that can affect its blooms.

Most bluebells are found in ancient woodland as they prefer moist, shady conditions and the stability offered by a well-established habitat. Bluebells make the most of flowering early in the spring before the surrounding trees come out in full leaf and completely shade the woodland floor.

For this reason they are an important early flower for many pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. The sweet nectar hidden in the brightly coloured 'bell' of the flower can be a lifeline for hungry insects emerging from a dormant winter state.

You can help: If you live near a population of native bluebells consider removing all Spanish or hybrid varieties from your garden. This will help prevent hybridisation in the wild. If you want to plant native bluebells in your garden, check the scientific labelling is *Hyacinithoides non-scripta*, and buy from a reputable nursery.

Photos of Spring Wood Peppard by Rebecca & John



Finally

The bluebells are a tourist attraction in some parts of England. “**Bluebell Trains**” once ran through the Chiltern Hills offering tourists a view of the masses of bluebells that helped earn the area the designation of “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”. Although these tourist trains no longer run, the Bluebell Railway in East Sussex runs past plenty of bluebells in the right season.



Warning: All parts of the bluebell plant contain toxins, and the leaves have been known to cause digestive problems in cattle and horses. Also touching its sap may cause dermatitis. And remember as well as a £5,000 fine, picking bluebells and bringing them to your home means inviting bad luck to enter into your life because based on many folklore, the fairies have cast a spell that will bring bad luck to anyone who dares to destroy (or pick) this majestic-looking flower.

Photos of Tartary Wood --Jessie & Susan --

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