

Tall grass management allows a wide range of grass and flower species to flourish, which in turn supports a huge number of birds, insects, mammals and amphibians.

Grass species will produce seeds and pollen and can look equally as beautiful as wild flowers.

What are you likely to see:

Tall grass:

Daisies, buttercups and dandelions are likely to be the first species to appear. These provide an early food source for bees, bumblebees, hover flies and other pollinators.

There are 25 species of bumblebee in the UK. However, bumblebees are disappearing – six out of the 25 species have declined in numbers by at least 80% over the last 50 years.

As the growing season gets underway various species of grass will become visible; some of the different grasses that you may see can be seen on the right.

Tall grass improves conditions for insects by providing shelter and areas for them to breed, which in turn provides food for birds and mammals such as hedgehogs.

A number of species of moth, butterfly as well as craneflies and sawflies will breed within the long grass. Meadow brown butterfly, in particular, roosts in tall grass clumps and its larvae will feed off arrangement of tall grass species.

Spiders can also build their webs within the tall grass to catch flies, and hunting spiders will creep through the grass to prey on other insects.

The grass heads will produce an abundance of seed which provides a food source for a number of bird species such as dunnocks, house sparrows and finches.

Birds will also eat a number of associated insects.

Moth caterpillars are a staple part of the blue tit's diet – a large brood of blue tits is capable of eating more than 10,000 caterpillars before they fledge!



Yorkshire Fog



Meadow Foxtail grass



Yorkshire Fog with Buttercups



Ribwort Plantain



False Oat grass



Cocks foot

Tall grass provides cover and traps moisture making ideal terrestrial habitat for a range of amphibians, the attracted insects then provide the amphibians with a food source. A number of bird species will also feed off amphibians, such as magpies/crows/ravens.

Small mammals, such as field mice and voles, will use tall grass areas for cover when moving from one area to another. It also provides them with an abundance of food sources, both seeds and insects. Some will also nest within the clumps of grass.

These changes to the habitat create a diverse ecosystem supporting a range of species.

Other flower species such as cuckoo flower (early in the season) ragwort, knapweed and cow parsley will thrive alongside grass species.

These grass and flower species will support a range of insects and butterflies. Cuckoo flower in particular is the early food source for orange tip butterflies and ragwort is the food source for the cinnabar moth caterpillars.

Knapweed is a brilliant food source for the common blue and meadow brown butterflies.

Flower Meadows:

Flower meadows are amazing. They are fantastically colourful and support a number of different insects and bird species. However, they require very specific conditions to be able to flourish. Wild flowers require poor quality soil and this is not common in North Somerset in the places where we would like these meadows. Our amenity grass sites have had years of the grass clippings being left behind which enriched the soil as the cuttings rot down. Many of these sites have at one time or another been fertilised or have been disturbed during development again increasing nutrient levels. Soil in North Somerset is often also clay heavy which can also make it harder for flowers to establish.

To start to reduce soil fertility we will need to cut and remove the grass each year in late summer. This is very labour intensive and will involve specialist machinery. It will take time for flowers to establish and further work involving seeding or plug planting may be required. If this work can be carried out we will be rewarded with a range of colourful flowers such as red or white campion, forget-me-nots, oxeye daisy, salad burnet, selfheal, scabious and St Johns-wort. The overall biodiversity benefits for a flower meadow is similar to tall grass areas.



Mouse



Common toad



Knapweed



Cinnabar moth caterpillar



Orange tip butterfly