

WILD YOUR SPACE

Wild your school
Rewild your children

Native Climbers

Climbing plants are mostly easy to grow, and bring visible results in a shorter space of time when compared to most other plants. Just one or two plants can quickly cover an unsightly fence or building wall whilst bringing year round benefits to many different species of insects and birds. Insects will shelter from the rain, birds (who may even choose to nest in your new climber) will feed on the insects, pollinators will visit the flowers, and the berries will provide autumn and winter food for many.



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your new climber) will feed on the insects, pollinators will visit the flowers, and the berries will provide autumn and winter food for many.

We like to think of this as vertical rewilding, and it can be especially useful for more urban school playgrounds, or

indeed any area where there is little space to plant at ground level. Climbers can offer unique habitats, and as such, attract species that you may not otherwise see in your school garden. By planting thoughtfully, you can also use climbers to help join-up a network of different mini rewilding projects and create a wildlife corridor in doing so. Regardless of how many native climbers you grow, the importance of their role in nature restoration is undisputed and the benefits will be obvious.

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There are a decent number of climbing plants that are native to Scotland, and from these, Bright Green Nature are particularly happy to recommend the following (all of which will offer numerous benefits to your local wildlife)...

- **Native Ivy**

a popular choice and one that will grow quickly almost anywhere. It has the added advantage for being an evergreen. Some people may tell you that an Ivy can damage, or even kill a tree – NOT TRUE! An Ivy growing up a tree is as nature intended, and brings various benefits to numerous species, with no harm being done. Others will tell you that Ivy can damage the masonry in buildings – if the masonry is in good condition that should not be the case, but common sense dictates that you carefully consider which buildings you choose to cloak with a rapidly growing Ivy.

- **Honeysuckle**

another popular choice that will grow quickly and be enjoyed and appreciated by many species (including people).

- **Dog Rose**

these may take a bit longer to become as established, but when they do they will look beautiful – especially whilst in flower. They also produce the well known rosehips, which birds will eat when other food can be hard to find in the colder months.

- **Wild Clematis (or Traveller's Joy, or Old Man's Beard)**

another fast growing and easily recognised native climber. Their flowering season can be a short one, but it is incredibly impressive – an absolute joy in fact.

Funding

Also, don't forget our Wild Your Space Microgrant, which is unique to the Scottish Borders and which has already helped numerous local schools to make their playgrounds more wildlife (and child) friendly.

So, if you need some funding to help you to turn your vision into reality, have a look on the Bright Green Nature website

www.brightgreennature.org/microgrant

Top Tips

- As always, give consideration to soil types/conditions, and whether you'll be planting in a sunny or a shady position.
- Think ahead – climbers can, and probably will, all grow fast, and will often end up straying quite a long way from their root base. Will this present any future problems and will you be able to provide the required (although basic) maintenance?
- Most climbers will grow easily from cuttings, reducing the need to buy too many individual plants (if any), and giving you good reason to grow your climbers in as many suitable locations as possible.
- Some climbers will thrive growing in, and through, hedgerows and brash hedges.
- Be creative when choosing, or making your supports. Ideally using reclaimed materials, such as old netting, old fencing or dead branches. If you have to use new materials use wire, wood or cane (NOT plastic). There is a great selection of ideas here - 8 Ideas From Horticulturists To Support Climbing Plants As They Grow | Horticulture Magazine. horticulture.co.uk/climbers/support-ideas/

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Learning Opportunities/ Lesson Ideas

It would be fun for children to grow their own climbers from small cuttings. Whose plant grows the quickest? They could also measure growth of more established plants on a regular basis (a Clematis could easily show visible daily/weekly growth in the right conditions).

Children could research to see how many different species (bugs and birds) different climbers can support. They can also analyse and compare the differences between evergreen and deciduous plants (and at different times of the year).

Photographs (or sketches) of the wall or fence before and after, showing the rapid benefits offered would also show and record their good work.



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