

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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Kemerton Wood Wildflower Project Report 13th December 2019

Project Background

Mature native woodland usually consists of three layers: the tree canopy, shrub layer and ground flora. Each of these layers has its own importance for the species dependent on it, and a fully functioning woodland ecosystem needs all three layers to be well established.

Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) helps to oversee and manage Kemerton Wood – 110 acres of young woodland surrounding Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Most of the woodland has been planted within the last 40 years and so has not yet had time to develop a rich ground flora. The Trust has been planting locally sourced native bluebell and wild daffodil bulbs in sections of the woodland since 2009, using a variety of methods, to build on earlier trials which established native plants such as bluebell and wood anemone in small fenced deer-proof enclosures in the woodland.

Continuing this work, the Trust sought funding to plant bluebells and wild daffodils in several more sections of the woodland. In order to increase the area covered, KCT proposed sowing bluebell seeds, as these are much cheaper and the Trust can therefore buy more and cover a much larger area. They are also quicker to sow than bulbs are to plant. Wild daffodil are only available as bulbs so a smaller number of these were proposed as well to add to the floristic biodiversity of the woodland.

Having secured funding through a generous donation of £500 from Friends of KCT Miles and Joan Kulakundis in May 2019, the project was planned for autumn 2019. The Trust would use volunteers to sow the seeds and plant the bulbs, with the donation covering the costs of the seeds and bulbs themselves, as well as bulb planters for the volunteers to use.

Project Aims

The main aim of the project was to increase the ground flora within Kemerton Woods, which adjoins Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. This would be through planting 80,000 English bluebell seeds and 500 wild daffodil bulbs. The seeds and bulbs would be planted in small patches throughout the woodland on either side of South Ride to maximise the potential for the plants to spread unaided in the future. Some would be planted on the edge of South Ride, which is a permissive path open to the public all year round, to allow visitors to enjoy the wildflowers in the spring.

Overview of Works

The bulb planting and seed sowing was carried out over two volunteer work parties in autumn 2019, as this is the best time for planting and sowing these species.

The bluebell seeds and daffodil bulbs were ordered in the summer. At the time of ordering, the bluebell seeds were on special offer so 120,000 were purchased (600g). The Bluebell seeds were native *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* English Bluebells from Lincolnshire. The Daffodil bulbs were native *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* Daffodil bulbs and were sourced from Wales.

At our work party on 28th September, 4 volunteers (including our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, who managed the project) planted 500 daffodil bulbs in groups of 5 scattered through sections of the woodland along the South Ride (See Appendix B – Map of Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve & Adjoining Woodlands). The volunteers used bulb planters to remove a plug of soil, place a bulb in the hole to the correct depth and then put the soil plug back on top and tamp down. Bulbs were planted primarily in bare areas under broadleaf trees, as they prefer some shade, and in the grass edge of the ride itself to ensure visitors would get to enjoy the sight in the spring (see Appendix A – Photo Montage).

At our work party on 26th October, 4 volunteers (including our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, who managed the project) turned out in pouring rain to sow 120,000 bluebell seeds. The seeds were sowed through sections of the woodland along the South Ride (see Appendix B – Map of Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve & Adjoining Woodlands). Before sowing, the seeds were weighed out into 10g packets so they could be sowed in 10m² patches (1g=1m²). The patches were prepared by raking off leaf litter etc., sowing the seeds by scattering across the cleared area, and then raking the leaf litter back over the sown patch. The seeds were sowed primarily under oak trees and hazel coppice, as those provide the best conditions for bluebells, and also on patches on the edge of the ride itself to ensure visitors would get to enjoy the sight in the spring (see Appendix A – Photo Montage). The sowing conditions were difficult, with the volunteers soaked through by the end, but all seeds were successfully sowed.

Project Results

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsor, and the hard work of our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and our work party volunteers, this project will result in a tangible improvement to Kemerton Wood. 500 Daffodil bulbs and 120,000 Bluebell seeds were planted/sowed in the woodland along the South Ride where it is hoped they will spread and multiply to one day result in stunning flower-filled woodland. These spring flowers will provide a crucial source of nectar for a wide range of pollinators at a time when few flowers are out, as well as delighting visitors with their beauty.

The use of volunteer labour enhanced the value of the project, with the only financial costs the purchase of seeds, bulbs and bulb planters.

The Future

In order to monitor the success rate of the seeds, three areas have been chosen for surveying in spring each year for the next 3 years to see how many plants germinate and grow to flowering (seeds take at least 3 years to reach flowering stage). Photos will be

taken of the areas, as well as any flowering Daffodil bulbs in the same areas and along the South Ride edge, to document any changes over the three years. The true success of the project will only be known in 5-10 years, when it is hoped a significant number will have reached flowering stage and begun to multiply on the site.

Acknowledgements

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank our generous project sponsors Friends of KCT Miles and Joan Kulakundis, without whom this work could not have been carried out.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly our hardworking volunteers.

Appendix A: Project Photo Montage

Photos © K Aubury



Kate Aubury & KCT volunteers with Daffodil bulbs, Kemerton Wood, 280919



Daffodil bulbs in the ground, Kemerton Wood, 280919



KCT volunteer planting daffodil bulbs, Kemerton Wood, 280919



KCT volunteer preparing a patch for sowing, Kemerton Wood, 261019



A patch after sowing bluebell seeds, Kemerton Wood, 261019



Kate Aubury & KCT volunteers braving the pouring rain to sow bluebell seeds, Kemerton Wood, 261019



Wild Daffodils flowering in an existing enclosure, Kemerton Wood, 2018

Appendix B: Map of KLNR & Adjoining Woodland Walks showing South Ride



Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve & Adjoining Woodland Walks

