



Initial Biodiversity Plot Assessment Report

2nd July 2025

with **Ian Wright | Senior Conservation Ranger at idverde**
and

Ravensbourne Road Allotment Committee Members:
Pip, Biodiversity Champion, Cecilia and Kamila

As part of the idverde's Biodiversity Champion Programme, Pip contacted our idverde representative for Ravensbourne Road allotments, Ian Wright, for a site visit to provide advice on how to enhance the biodiversity and answer any other questions. Ian was incredibly knowledgeable and it was an extremely helpful and valuable session.

idverde Bromley are contracted by Bromley Council and part of idverde UK, the UK and Europe's leading provider of grounds maintenance services and landscape creation projects. idverde manages all public greenspace on behalf of Bromley.

Below are the findings from the site visit organised firstly by area and then general advice by subject:

1. Ravensbourne Tributary (aka Ditch)

Boarding in Tributary

A tributary of the Ravensbourne River runs alongside the alleyway on the allotment. This fills up with water from time to time, though it has not for a while. A few years ago, as was the fashion at the time and now proven unnecessary, the council added boarding to secure the edges of the river.

This is now in a sorry state and needs removing as it's fallen into the tributary. Ian agreed the boarding needs removing, not only as it is dangerous for us to access the ditch, but it is also a hazard to wildlife as they could get caught and injured in it.

Advice:

Ian advised that sadly neither the council or idverde would be able to fund the boarding removal, and therefore we will need to remove this ourselves.

Action: *Pip/Andrew lead*

Possibly Will and Cecilia's friend Chris to chop the boarding into small panels and remove. Whoever does the work should work in pairs as potentially dangerous. Position removed boarding by front gate for the next work day skip removal.

Trees by Tributary

As two trees by the ditch have fallen this year, there were concerns that this due to the dry weather and that trees bordering the tributary were unduly suffering.

Advice:

Ian was pleased with the log piles created from the fallen trees which will be a great environment for insects, beetles and mammals.

He advised that the large fallen tree had died due to a fungus, but all the remaining trees look in good health and not to worry.

However, he was not happy with the laurel trees and these should be removed.

Laurel trees, particularly Cherry Laurel, negatively impacts biodiversity due to their invasive nature and ability to outcompete native species. While they can provide some habitat for certain birds and insects, their dense shade and potential toxicity (due to cyanide) limits the overall biodiversity they support.

Action: Cecilia lead

Cecilia has a very knowledgeable friend, Ishipe, whom Ian also knows, who may be able to advise on best way to remove the laurels. Will and Chris help with removal?

Woodland Trust supply native tree whips for any replanting.

Keep an eye out for any free offers that they occasionally run.

<https://shop.woodlandtrust.org.uk/hedging-trees>

2. Wild Woodland Area (Plot D8)

The plot in the far corner by the railway embankments and the River Ravensbourne bridge has been left to naturalise. A plan to 'regenerate' had been mooted.

Advice:

The area should be kept as a riverside woodland area, requiring a light and sensitive touch to keep and increase its biodiversity.

Ian was impressed by the coppiced hazels. This is a traditional way of looking after woodland and will be a naturally regenerative source of bean sticks and poles.

He advised that the hazel should be coppiced on a rotational cycle, so each area is then harvested at different times, resulting in a mosaic of regrowth at various stages.

This creates a variety of habitats for wildlife and provides a sustainable source of wood.

He liked the undergrowth mix, with such plants as the native stinking iris.

Wild garlic can be added to area as it is appropriate to the woodland situation.

The bramble undergrowth is a great nectar source and good for insects and should not be removed. In winter the brambles can have a light hand cutting (not strimmed) to keep in check.

There is a young tree which is leaning across and rubbing a more mature tree, so this younger tree needs removing.

The apple tree with the ivy covering is great for wildlife. Ian advised to keep an eye on it, but both look in healthy condition at the moment. If it looks as if it might be an issue in the future, the tree can be made into a monolith. Monoliths are created to manage the risk associated with large, potentially hazardous dead trees by reducing their height and spread while still retaining them as standing deadwood. Retaining monoliths provides crucial habitat for various species, including insects, birds, and fungi, that rely on decaying wood for food and shelter.

He advised to make specific woodpiles rather than leaving it over the undergrowth, and creating possible dead hedges.

Remove cast iron bath from the area as it is too dark under the tree cover for a healthy pond.

Action: *Pip lead*

Pip will look after the woodland area with Cecilia's advice.

Coppicing when and where appropriate. Removal of young tree with hand saw.

Pip will bring wild garlic from home to transplant in the spring. Create the woodpiles, and a possible dead hedge.

Removal of the very heavy bath – if anyone would like this?

If not, contact local scrap for removal.

3. Triangular Plot (C2a)

This small plot was created as a small 'starter plot' for new plot holders. However, it has been difficult to let. At the moment Cecilia has kindly planted this with potatoes.

Advice:

To create an open wildlife and pond area. Ian advised on a nectar rich seed mix and recommended Pictorial Meadows: <https://www.pictorialmeadows.co.uk/>

They also offer consultation: <https://www.pictorialmeadows.co.uk/pages/consultation>

Action: *Cecilia lead*

Create a middle sized pond with surrounding nectar rich meadow, funded by the allotment. Will and Chris help with creation?

4. Communal Area (B10)

Grassland under the apple tree

Advice:

Ian spotted interesting native plants such as ragwort and nipplewort within the grass. Nipplewort is edible and has a long history of use as a food and medicinal plant in various cultures. The young leaves, flowers, and stems of the plant can all be consumed, and they have a mild and slightly bitter flavour. It's beneficial for bees, butterflies, and hoverflies, which are important pollinators. The seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals.

Large numbers of invertebrates feed off ragwort, such as the cinnabar moth.

He advised that the area should be mown yearly at the end of the season, Sept/Oct time. Always leave different patches unmown every year.

Action: *Cecilia/Pip/Andrew lead*

Leave grass under apple tree as much as possible. Try to annually mow leaving different areas of unmown patches each year.

General Advice

a. Apps

Idverde encourages recording, not just of the unusual but the usual too so that a good general picture is built up of the area. As well as using the QR code on the poster in the noticeboard, you can also record here: <https://irecord.org.uk/app>

‘Seek’ is a great app for identifying insects, birds and plants, details here: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.inaturalist.seek&hl=en-GB>

b. Bamboo

Keep in check, stop the bamboo spreading by digging up any new shoots.

c. Bats

Ian was pleased we have bats on site. Idverde will send a Bat report to Pip which will be shared with all. Cecilia’s friend is very knowledgeable about bats and may be able to identify them.

d. Bees

Beekeeping is something that has been previously raised. We discussed the below article which argues whether keeping bees is that good for the native bee varieties: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/apr/07/help-bees-dont-become-a-beekeeper-honeybeee-hive-biodiversity>

Ian’s advice is that keeping domestic bees is ok, but we should increase as much as possible opportunities for all pollinators by planting nectar rich species.

However, as there are also wider issues of swarming and care, this will be a bigger question for the committee to decide upon.

e. Dead Trees and Tree Removal

Before removing a tree, the council must first be informed.

Ian couldn’t see an issue with the cherry on plot C13B being removed, but should be checked.

If a tree is dead the council will deal with it. Report this and dangerous trees on: <https://www.fixmystreet.com>

f. Flytipping

This can be dealt with by the council, so next time this happens we can report using FixMyStreet (link as above).

g. Foxes

They can be controversial, however they are natural pest controllers and can help reduce the spread of diseases like Lyme disease by limiting rodent populations. Therefore, keeping them healthy is a good thing.

h. Funding

Keep an eye out for special funding for allotments and specific projects which become available from charities and organisations from time to time.

i. Pesticides

Use of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertiliser should be minimised.

j. Ponds

A variety of ponds on the plot is excellent. Try to use native plants and those that are appropriate to the pond size.

Use UK rather than the larger leaved American duckweed. Remove any duckweed regularly and leave on the side of the pond so that anything can crawl back into the pond. A third of the pond surface should be open water.

For child safety, make sure the ponds are covered with a grille. Stones/bricks/wood should be positioned so birds, etc can easily get in or out of the pond. Wildlife Trust has good advice on wildlife pond building: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-pond>

k. Tree and Hedge Trimming

It's best to avoid tree and hedge cutting between March and August. However, some birds may nest outside of these dates, so it's important to check for active nests before any work begins.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects birds, their nests, and eggs, so disturbing them during nesting can have legal consequences.

l. Woodchip

Idverde don't, in general, recommend using woodchip. It's not something that naturally occurs in the large amounts that are used. Ian said that it's best not to use it as paths as you'll just have to keep topping up. He could see the benefit of using it as a mulch, but there are better alternatives such as homemade compost, planting densely, grass cuttings, companion planting and living mulches.

m. Talk to Plotolders

Ian would be happy to return later in the year, around mid-Oct to give a talk to all, which would be great and we should definitely take him up on this.

n. Final Thoughts

Ian spotted his first gatekeeper butterfly of the year on our allotment and was very pleased with the overall biodiversity of the site. He especially commended the entrance flower area on B1. It's an exciting opportunity to enhance the biodiversity further following all the knowledge and advice shared. Final thought from Ian 'always think of the consequences of what you're doing'.

Further reading:

<https://www.idverde.co.uk/news/biodiversity-champions-scheme-launched-in-bromley/>

<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/639/bromley-biodiversity-plan>

(Gardens and Allotments Page 99 – 104)

<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/biodiversity>

If you have any questions, thoughts, etc, please contact **Pip** via **WhatsApp** or email:
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