



# Wild About Barrow

October 2021

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## A colourful season

As our earth progresses in its orbit, Britain tilts away from the sun and brings shorter days, cool misty mornings and a rich, ripe mellowness to our lives. After the busyness of summer, autumn is the final chance to fatten up, build food stores and be in the right place for the harsh weather ahead. Many people name this season as their most favourite and no wonder with the glorious multi-coloured festival of leaves before they fall. It's also a fruitful time with the harvest gathered in and English apples back in shops. It's easy to forget the seasonal joy of food when we can buy almost anything all year round nowadays.

No doubt everyone agrees with the notion of buying local to reduce their carbon footprint but do we know what animals are fed on? It is impossible to tell. For example, has a chicken you bought as a better alternative than a methane belching cow, been fed on locally grown grain or soya from a newly cleared rainforest? Very often we are eating the rainforest: eating our future. The only solution is to reduce our meat consumption or go vegetarian/vegan. Do you have any good vegetarian recipes to tempt us? Send them to [wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com](mailto:wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com), post on Barrow in Bloom Facebook page or to 15 Ennerdale Road for inclusion in next month's notes.

## COP26 or Cop out?

Our future well-being depends, to a great extent, on the success of the UN Climate Change Conference being held in Glasgow at the beginning of November. The UN Secretary-General described the IPCC report as a '*code red for humanity*'. Despite this dire warning, we cannot rely solely on the powers that be. We have the power of the many. If we all eat less meat, buy local, garden for nature, leave the car at home etc., it **will** make a difference. So regardless of whether it's a cop-out nor not in November, we all need to do our bit.

## Show you care

**Wild About Barrow** invites you to show you care for the natural world by sending in photos of your garden, paintings, drawings, poems etc. It might simply be a log pile, bird feeder, wildflower seed heads or something artistic showing love of nature or inspiration for what we can do to help solve the biodiversity and climate crises. We'll publish them next month. Go on – inspire others!

Send ideas to [wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com](mailto:wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com), post on Barrow in Bloom Facebook page or post to 15 Ennerdale Road.

## Glorious Autumn Colours



Have you ever wondered what makes trees shed their leaves? It starts with reduced light levels in autumn and cooling temperatures. These trigger changes to plant hormones causing cell walls at the base of the leaf to weaken. At the same time, other cells expand, leading to a break with the weakened cells. The result is like tearing perforated paper, and the leaf drops to the ground.

Photosynthesis slows down during this season so little food is produced and damage caused by rough weather leads to entry points for infection. Also, leaves constantly lose water which is difficult to replace when the ground is frozen. Consequently, it is better for trees to shed leaves. Before falling, useful minerals are withdrawn and even waste substances dumped into the leaf. The beautiful autumn colour emerges as chloroplasts – the green part of the leaf – are broken down and reabsorbed to reveal the yellow and orange pigments. The reds and purples come from new colours forming as their chemistry alters, like the ripening in fruit.

You might wonder why conifers keep their leaves. Well, the leaves are reduced to needles and are heavily impregnated with resin which reduces water loss. These adaptations, together with the general shape of the trees, allow them to withstand all that winter throws at them. They can reduce water in their leaves to withstand freezing temperatures. So, conifers are very well adapted to the cold hostile conditions of northern latitudes.

## Wild Celebration October

Apart from the pretty mallow, which was spotted on Psalter Lane (so good to see the wildflowers growing back!), all the other gems this month are growing at the side of the footpath joining Breachfield Road and Poppyfields. The footpath takes you through a wild part of Barrow to the back of Millie's Cafe and Farm Shop. Sadly, though, there's no entry here.



Dwarf mallow (*Malva neglecta*) Redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*) Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)



Hawthorne (*Crataegus monogyna*) Greater plantain (*Plantago major*) Wild Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

The deeply lobed leaves give away the red-berried shrub as the common hawthorn and not the Midland hawthorn. Also, if you break open the haw you will find one seed and not two, as in Midland variety.

The plantain is a weed that withstands us trampling over it and we mostly don't notice it. However, ... if you take a moment to look more closely you will see a rosette of beautifully curved, ribbed leaves with towering flower spikes that turn a fabulous reddish-purple colour as the seeds mature. Isn't it wonderful that when you look at the ordinary in nature it turns out to be amazing!

What have you seen? Send your pictures to [wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com](mailto:wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com), post on Barrow in Bloom Facebook page or to 15 Ennerdale Road for inclusion next month. There's no need to identify, we'll try to do that. Just tell us where you saw it so we can look first hand.

### **Chicken in the Woods**

This spectacular bracket fungus cannot be missed on the green at the bottom of Brook Street growing on the stump of an old tree. It has one or two common names including Crab of the Woods, Sulphur Polypore, Sulphur Shelf, as well as Chicken in the Woods.



White-Pored Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus Cincinnatus*)

Fungi are a kingdom of their own, separate to the animal and plant kingdoms. They absorb food from the substrate it grows on, in this case wood, and grows fruiting bodies which produce spores to reproduce. The only plants to produce spores are ferns and mosses but they are different to fungi spores.

The bracket of Chicken in the Woods grows as a striking golden-yellow shelf-like structure which fades with age on tree trunks and branches. The under surface of the fruiting body is made up of tube-like pores rather than gills. It is common in the UK and grows mainly on oak but can be found on other broadleaved trees.

It's called the "Chicken of the Woods" because of its remarkable resemblance to chicken meat when cooked properly. It has the same texture and actually tastes like chicken too! It certainly makes a very good vegetarian substitute for chicken but only if you pick the right part of the mushroom and only if it's properly cooked. However, **Wild About Barrow** does not recommend eating any wild mushroom as some are extremely poisonous and it is often difficult to distinguish edible from poisonous mushrooms.

## What to see

1. **Chicken in the Woods fungus** on the green at the bottom of Brook Street
2. Look out for a **variety of other fungi**. Damp weather is ideal for spores to germinate so fungi time their reproduction to take advantage of this.
3. **Take a walk on the wild side** from Breachfield past Poppyfields and discover the wonder of nature in autumn
4. **Visit the best place in the country** to see the glories of autumn colours: the Acer Glade at Westonbirt National Arboretum, 3 miles SW of Tetbury. Definitely worth a visit!

## What to do

1. Keep **sticks and twigs and put in them in a pile** in an undisturbed corner of the garden for insects and other minibeasts. They will love to hide in hollow tubes, the gaps between sticks and other nooks and crannies.

2. **Find out what plastics Charnwood BC will recycle** because if the wrong type of plastic is found, the whole load can be rejected and sent to landfill. The good news is that our local Co-op has a Terracycle bin and other bins that recycle soft plastics such as crisp and biscuit wrappers.
3. **Tesco, The Rushes**, Loughborough is one of only 3 of their Leicestershire stores to trial a **Loop scheme**. A wide range of products are available in reusable, durable packaging. Customers return the empty jars, bottles and boxes instead of throwing them away. Greenpeace says that if supermarkets replicated this on a large scale, they could ditch thousands of tonnes of plastic. It adds that 12.7 million tonnes of plastic enter the oceans every year and plastic pollution is now the biggest killer of marine life. **Waitrose tops the league table** of supermarkets addressing the plastic problem. Check out the league table yourself and decide which is best at: <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/supermarket-plastic-league-table-rankings/>

**Think global: Act local**