

BRITISH BLUEBELLS adapted by Janey Hewitt from a fact sheet by John Rhymer, Bishops Wood Centre www.bishopswoodcentre.org.uk

Why Bluebells are important

- Half the world's population of bluebells are in Britain
- Bluebells are an important source of nectar for spring insects
- The bluebell is Britain's most popular flower

Bluebells are in trouble

- Bluebell bulbs have been dug up to sell in the garden centres. Since 1998 this has been made illegal.
- The Spanish bluebell has escaped from gardens into the wild. It has bred with the native bluebell to produce a scentless hybrid which also interbreeds with the native bluebell.
- Woodland habitats have been lost. Only 5% of Britain is now covered with trees.
- **Climate change is causing Spring to come earlier.** The bluebell is adapted to take advantage of the brief period between the soil warming and the tree canopy leafing up. With trees coming into leaf earlier and other plants bringing their rapid growth period forward, the bluebell will be at a disadvantage.

Bluebell facts

- Bluebell bulbs are poisonous and were used as a rat poison.
- Adults wandering into a bluebell patch may become so enchanted that they are unable to leave until other humans come to lead them out.
(*Teachers: don't tell your pupils!*)
Plant bluebells in your garden to attract the fairies
If you hear a bluebell ringing there is a malicious fairy nearby.

How your school can help the bluebell

- Never dig up bluebell bulbs and only buy from a reputable source.
- Help reduce the onset of climate change by reducing your school's CO2 emissions.

Native Bluebells

Usually darker blue or white

Scented

Bells are on one side of the stem

Spanish Bluebells

Usually paler blue but can be pink, mauve or white
not scented

Bells all over the stem

Internet resources are plentiful, and many include curriculum links. To save you time we have listed a few of the many excellent web sites to whet your appetite:

www.plantlife.org.uk

<http://www.gp.com/educationalinnature/forestis/closeup.html>

<http://www.countrysideinfo.co.uk/bluebells.htm>

http://www.plantcultures.org/schools/schools_landing.html