

Trick or ... a weed pull? Bat-friendly landscaping can help bats at Halloween

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As Halloween approaches, images of scary bats become commonplace. This is the perfect time of year to counter bat myths and do something to help bats. International Bat Week is October 24th to 31st. Bat Week is all about appreciating these amazing animals and their benefits, including eating insects, pollinating flowers, and spreading seeds and nutrients.

This Bat Week, consider bat-friendly gardening. Planting native trees, shrubs, or flowers in your yard, as well as light-coloured and night-blooming flowers, will support the insects that our BC bats like to eat. Controlling invasive plant species also helps insects and bats thrive, so consider a weed-pull in your yard, street, or local park or wetland. In September the Lillooet naturalists conducted the annual Lillooet Rivershore Clean-Up – and each year we are finding less garbage and turning more of our efforts to invasive weeds. Burdock is a particularly nasty weed for bats, and can be fatal for them if they get trapped in it. Lillooet Regional Invasive Species Society has information about weeds and bats www.liriss.ca. You can also find information on bat-friendly gardening through the Community Bat Program at www.bcbats.ca. More information about local area bats is at www.lillooetnaturalistsociety.org. The Lillooet Brewery is featuring bats this month – stop in and pick up a Lillooet Bat checklist, why not?

Bats in BC help control agricultural and forest pests, as well as mosquitoes. Over half the species in this province are considered at risk. With the ongoing threat and spread of White-nose Syndrome, now confirmed in Washington State, bat conservation is more important than ever.

Bat Week also marks the time of year when bats disappear from our neighbourhoods until the return of warmer weather in spring. As insect-eaters, our BC bats must leave their summer roost sites and migrate or hibernate to survive the winter. This absence means that this is the time of year to do home renovations such as cleaning out and repairing a bat box, or doing bat-friendly exclusion work, when you won't disturb or injure bats.

If you do see a bat in winter, please report it. Monitoring for white-nose syndrome in BC will continue this winter, with Community Bat Programs requesting reports of dead bats or sightings of winter bat activity. In partnership with the BC Ministry of Environment, and funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Forest Enhancement Society of BC, Habitat Stewardship Program, and the Lillooet Naturalists, the BC Community Bat Program provides information and promotes local stewardship and citizen science. You can report winter bat sightings, find out more about the BC Community Bat Program and options for helping local bat populations, at www.bcbats.ca or 1-855-922-2287.

Photos: - provided by BC Bat Program



Bat box time for maintenance: Fall is the perfect time to check that your bat box is well-attached, water-tight and clean, ready to offer a safe roosting site for bats in spring. Photo: Habitat Acquisition Trust



Bats in a bat box: Bat boxes can provide a secure roost site for bats if properly installed and maintained. Photo: Sunshine Coast Wildlife Project



Long-eared Myotis in Burdock - Removing invasive plants such as burdock allows native plants to thrive and reduces hazards for bats. Photo: M Anion