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The magical interaction between flowers and their pollinators

VOICES

FLOWERS FOR THE ROYAL CORONATION



David Bek is a Reader in Sustainable Economies based at the Research Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University (UK), where he co-leads the Sustainable Production and Consumption Cluster. Here he writes about the Floral Crowning Glory at the recent Coronation.

"The Coronation of The King and Queen of Great Britain took place at Westminster Abbey on Saturday, 6 May 2023. The floristry in the Abbey reflected King Charles, *The environmentalist*.

An opportunity provided through King Charles III and the Queen Consort's Coronation has demonstrated that a well-organised network of small-scale flower growers can meet demanding specifications and production standards.

Britain's new monarch has been a fervent advocate of environmental issues and British farming, as well as a supporter of tackling climate change throughout his adult life.

The King has walked the talk in many ways, having been at the vanguard of organic farming on his Highgrove Estate since the 1980s. He also annually publishes carbon footprint records relating to his royal duties.

It was no surprise then that the floral displays in Westminster Abbey, London, were made up of seasonal British-grown flowers and foliage.

Produce was sourced from five Royal Horticultural Society gardens and 88 small-scale British flower growers who belong to Flowers from the Farm, an organisation whose members share a collective passion for producing seasonal flowers as sustainably as possible.

Royal florist and creative director of the



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coronation's floral displays, Shane Connolly, explained that in collaboration with Flowers from the Farm, he first provided a colour palette from which his team could build their designs within Westminster Abbey.

Then they asked Flowers from the Farm to source flowers and foliage from as much of the United Kingdom's land mass as possible.

A series of regional hubs were set up so that the flowers could be sorted and prepared for dispatch to London to meet the tight time schedule within which the floral designers had to execute their work within Westminster Abbey.

Connolly touts the final creation as 'simply spectacular and truly symbolic'.

Floral arrangements included 120 varieties of spring-flowering bulbs, blossoms, perennials, and foliage decorating the interior, particularly The Quire stalls and the entrance around the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

Connolly was delighted that all the flowers and foliage in Westminster Abbey came from British soil.

Furthermore, the unique flower displays really

captured the mediaeval essence of the King, the Crown, and the soil of Britain around him.

Until recently, Flowers from the Farm members have primarily focused their business efforts upon localised markets with very little linkage to more commercialised, mainstream sectors of the flower industry.

Yet, the organisation's ability to deliver high-quality, seasonal products – sourced literally from the four corners of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – for a landmark British State occasion with a global audience may well have been a defining moment for its Members and the British local-seasonal flower movement.

British growers will likely accelerate the market growth of flowers and foliage, representing a deep connection with nature and its heritage

Wendy Paul, co-chair of Flowers from the Farm, said, 'As suppliers of cut flowers, they have moved up to the next level when it comes to customer awareness'.

The Coronation saw an increase in the international understanding of British flowers and was definitely a game changer."