

Brown algae is mistaken for sewage

LUMPY brown matter washed up on a South Wales beach is not raw sewage, residents have been told.

Despite its apparent appearance, the material in the Ogmore-by-Sea area is a decaying form of algae, officers from the Environment Agency Wales have informed the public.

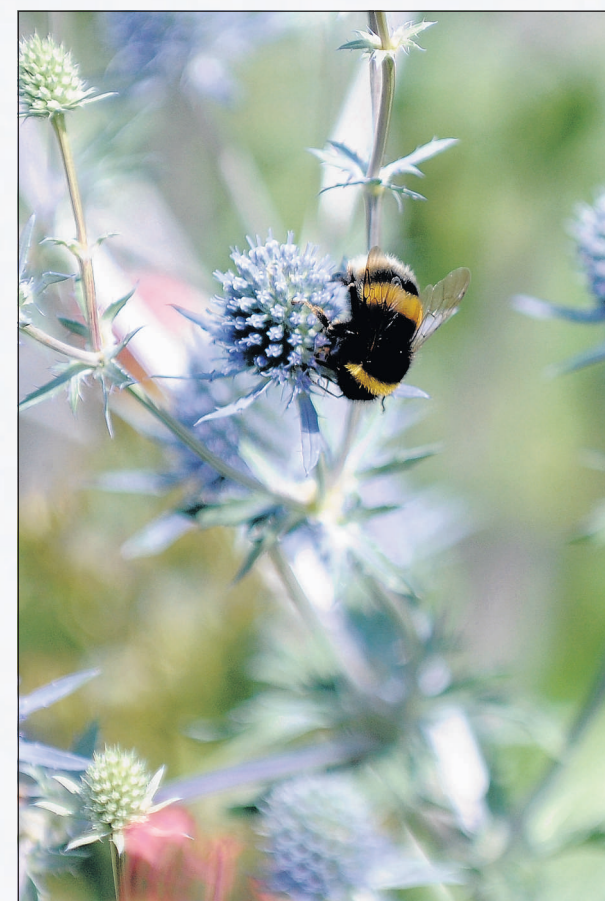
The Chaetoceros species of algae, which looks very similar to raw sewage, can be seen on the beach and in the water.

Environment Officer Adam Cooper said: "The algal blooms, particularly when viewed close up, can very easily be mistaken for sewage but local people and visitors to the area can rest assured that while the foams or scum washed in-shore aren't particularly attractive, their presence is a natural event which occurs most years.

"It's also not unique to Ogmore; other beaches on the Welsh coastline have also been affected."

The algae - not known to be toxic - grows because of rainfall washing nutrients into shallow seawaters, before being followed by warm sunny weather.

GARDEN HAVEN FLIES THE FLAG



IT is a haven of peace and tranquility - just a short walk from the hustle and bustle of the busy high street in an historic South Wales town.

Now the Physic Garden in Cowbridge has won a prestigious national environmental award for the second successive year.

Shoppers, workers, residents and visitors entering the garden will immediately feel a sense of peace and quiet, according to its creators.

The abundance of plants which were, and sometimes still are, used for medicinal purposes seem to have a calming effect on visitors who can stroll around or simply sit and enjoy the beauty of the garden.

What was once a wilderness is now a walled garden and has again won a Green Flag award.

The flag scheme is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales.

It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country.

Healing zone offers its visitors 'sense of peace'

Peter Collins
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Awards are given annually and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status.

Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves.

Dozens of volunteers have worked for more than five years to create the Physic Garden - and continue to maintain it.

The project was made possible thanks to Heritage Lottery and Creative Rural Communities grants of £350,000, plus financial "pledges" from people interested in seeing the garden blossom.

The garden now attracts more than 80,000 visitors a year.

It has plants for all manner of physical and mental ailments. All the plants were in Britain before 1800.

Couples who have just got married often head for the "Nerves" section of the garden where there are a selection of plants for nervous conditions.

Another popular section is the Heart and Blood area, while in the area set aside for childbirth the visitor will find Lemon Balm which "causeth the mind and heart to become merry, and reviveth the heart in faintings and swoonings".

The 12 beds surrounding the fountain in the middle of the garden each relate to a part of the body or to a medical condition. The beds contain some of the plants that have traditionally been used for treating ailments, including colds, headaches and stomachaches.

Volunteer Jo Homfray, who is also a trustee of the garden, said: "I get immense pleasure out of the garden and what we have done here.

"It is a joy to see so many people, young and old, enjoying the garden. It has also brought together a group of people who would not otherwise have come across each other. It has been a fantastic experience."

Thursday is volunteers' day at the garden, when people are invited to offer their service to keep it in top condition.

Gill Griffiths, a Royal Horticultural Society gold medalist for botanical painting, has captured many of the plants in

the garden. They have been reproduced on cards which visitors can buy.

"I have always liked gardening," she said. "As a volunteer here you meet so many other people and learn a lot about gardening. It's a wonderful place."

Visitor Shelley Smith, from nearby Colwinston, said: "It is a really peaceful place to be and a great place to learn about plants."

Another volunteer, retired pharmacist Sue Duffield, said: "It is interesting to discover the old remedies and uses the plants were put to in the past."



A 17TH CENTURY TAKE ON PLANTS

The healing properties of plants have been recognised since earliest recorded time. In the Middle Ages plants such as sage, rosemary, mint and thyme were used to prepare ointments, cordials, infusions and purgatives for treatment of monks and laity. Here are some of them, with descriptions by 17th-century herbalist and physician Nicholas Culpeper.

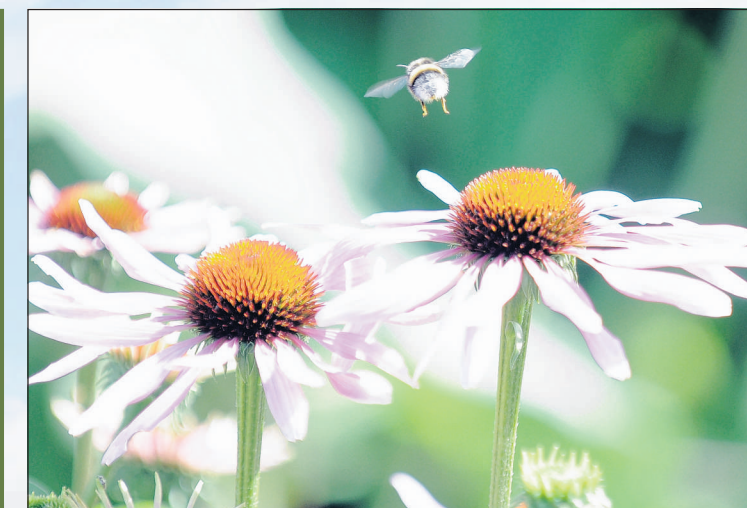
■ **Vervain.** This was one of three herbs held most sacred to the druids. According to Culpeper, "it killeth worms

and causeth a good colour in the face and body, strengtheneth and correcteth the diseases of the stomach, liver and spleen".

■ **Apple mint.** Also known as Monk's Herb. Culpeper says: "Applied to the forehead and temples, it easeth headache."

■ **Rosemary.** Culpeper believed Rosemary to be "an herb of great use, both for inward and outward diseases".

■ **Dandelion.** Culpeper said: "It openeth the passages of the urine in both young and old."



Jo Homfray, above right, and Gill Griffiths, above left, in the Physic Garden, Cowbridge. PICTURES: Matthew Horwood ©



NEWSBRIEF

Want to be firefighter?

■ FIND out what's involved in becoming a firefighter at a community day.

The fire service is organising the event in conjunction with Race Equality First at Channel View Leisure Centre, Grange Road, Cardiff, on Saturday.

For more information on the event visit www.southwales-fire.gov.uk

Fun for all the family

■ A FAMILY fun day will be held at the Mallings Park, Splott, Cardiff, tomorrow.

The Splott Neighbourhood Policing team-organised event will have police horses and dogs and emergency services vehicles among the attractions. Call 029 2022 2111, extension 63313 for information.

Focus on waste plant

■ A PUBLIC information session on the application for a permit to operate a waste treatment plant will be held at the Star Centre, Splott Road, Cardiff, on July 30.

The Environment Agency Wales is inviting input from the local community on Viridor's application for Trident Park, granted planning permission in June. The session will run between 2pm and 7pm.

Babies

Tell us about your new arrival contact Emily Woodrow on emily.woodrow@walesonline.co.uk or 029 2024 3643



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