



GREENER ROOFS.....

LEAVENHEATH • POLSTEAD • STOKE BY NAYLAND

Following an inspiring 'Green Teams' visit to the Beaumont "Eco" school in Hadleigh, I was so impressed by their 'green' roof that I thought I'd have a go. It's basically a roof covered with turf that has various membranes beneath to hold water and ensure it doesn't leak - how hard can it be? A quick search on t'internet revealed it was actually quite a specialist job and, more to the point, quite expensive to put in as an after thought (although quite a reasonable cost if you need a new roof anyway.)

Undeterred I made a start on a budget version for my flat roofed shed-cum-garage using a simple frame of 2x1 roofing batten, filled level with poor soil (1" deep) that had been sieved to take out the worst of the stones. I reasoned that the soil would do no more harm than the layer of shingle usually applied to similar roofs. Time will tell.

The plants used are from the Stonecrop (Sedum spp.) family, for example those bright yellow patches you sometimes see on walls, overhanging guttering, or along the side of roads. They are a type of 'succulent', i.e. able to store water in their fleshy leaves, and are relatively drought tolerant. They also come with red or white flowers, and leaf colours of various grey-greens and reds which also change colour through the seasons.

A packet containing 6000-8000 seeds of various Sedum species was bought from Nickys Seeds for about £7.50. (You can track them down on the internet.)

I mixed the seed with a 'carrier' (sand in this case) to help sow evenly. I also planted about 30 tiny cuttings from the Yellow Stonecrop Sedum acre from my garden wall, and planted some large tufts of another variety rescued from a concrete waste ground about to be developed. Incredibly all the



cuttings and plants seem to have taken and most of the seeds seem to have come up. At the moment it's a bit patchy but should fill in next year and completely cover the area.

(I had thought about making a green roof using native species such as those found in dry heathland habitats, which in natural situations require no maintenance other than rabbit grazing but, as someone pointed out, the rabbits would fall off.)

The insulating effects of the soil were felt immediately. The inside of the building was much cooler and hopefully when the plant cover is established it'll be even better - and a bit warmer in the winter. I don't expect it to make much of a dent in global warming but I was interested to make it work and, as a bonus, it makes an additional area of garden and the bees love it!

This information was provided by Richard Kilshaw, an ecologist whose work includes making wildlife surveys and site assessments. If you are inspired to make your own Green Roof you can get more information from Richard on 01206 262008 or (RkilshawEco@AOL.com)