

A Guide to Garden Dragonflies in June and July



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British Dragonfly Society is working to increase public understanding and awareness of dragonflies, their conservation and the challenges they face, in order to increase action for dragonflies across Britain.

Damselflies

Damselflies are smaller and more delicate than dragonflies.

They rest with wings folded over their bodies and have eyes separated on either side of their head.

Red-eyed Damselfly

This is a species which has dark red eyes (in the male) and blue at the end of the abdomen.

It is typically seen on floating leaves, seeming to prefer lily pads but any floating leaf or debris may hold one. It generally needs large ponds.



Male



Common Blue Damselfly

This lives up to its name; it is common and can be found in very large numbers but generally at larger lakes than a typical garden pond. However, they do occur at garden ponds and may visit a garden from a larger lake nearby.

The mark at the top of the abdomen in the male is a round dot joined to the black line at the end of the segment

The female is normally duller but there is a much more distinctive blue form.

Male



Female



Male



Azure Damselfly

This is the most frequent of the blue damselflies to be found in a garden.

Immature males tend to have whitish markings in place of the blue, particularly on the thorax.

The identification of the males depends on the black mark at the top of the abdomen, which is a “U” shaped mark in this species as illustrated.

Females are easier to distinguish from Common Blue Damselfly which is the other blue damselfly likely to occur in a garden. See the picture below. There is a form of the female which has blue markings.

Female



Blue-tailed Damselfly

This is a common species which stands out as having a blue segment at the end of its otherwise dark coloured abdomen.

The thorax is blue in the male.

The female occurs in a number of different colour forms in which the thorax may be blue, green, brown or pink with one form having a brown segment at the end of the abdomen rather than the usual blue.

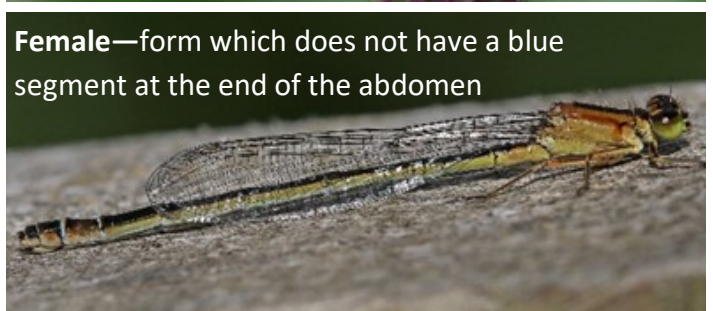
Female – the brightest colour form



Male— one form of female looks similar



Female—form which does not have a blue segment at the end of the abdomen



Beautiful Demoiselle

You are only likely to see this species if you are lucky enough to have a stream or river at the bottom of your garden.

The male has metallic blue coloured wings and the female has brown wings, which can appear quite orange when it is newly emerged.

This species prefers faster flowing streams but seems to be spreading to other types of stream and it does wander away from the streams to be seen in gardens and other habitats nearby.

Male



Female



Dragonflies

Dragonflies are larger than damselflies and stronger fliers.

They rest with their wings spread out from their bodies and their eyes meet at the centre line of their heads.

The three species most likely to be seen in gardens in spring are illustrated, but being stronger fliers, dragonflies wander further and other species might be seen at a location some way from their normal habitat.

Brown Hawker

Brown Hawker unsurprisingly has a brown body and brown tinted wings.

It is the only larger dragonfly with coloured wings and is therefore distinctive and easy to recognise, particularly as it is most often seen in flight.

It seems more wary than other Hawkers and generally sees you before you see it. However, sometimes it will perch and allow a close approach.

Male



Four-spotted Chaser

This species gets its name from the dark markings on the leading edge of its wings. The male and the female look very similar. In contrast to the Broad-bodied Chaser this species is not very territorial and several may be seen together at a larger pond. It does look superficially similar to female Broad-bodied Chaser but the four wing spots distinguish it.



Emperor Dragonfly

This is our largest dragonfly and one of the largest insects found in Britain. Males are a bright blue and difficult to confuse with any other species. It generally prefers larger ponds and other water bodies but often visits gardens to investigate smaller ponds. It is highly territorial and will constantly patrol a pond and chase away not just rival males but also other species of dragonfly. The female is green and will generally only visit a pond to lay eggs. She will land on floating vegetation and lower the tip of her abdomen into the water to insert her eggs before moving to another suitable piece of vegetation.

Male



Common Darter

Common Darter lives up to its name being widespread and occurring in fairly large numbers. Mature males are an orange red colour while immature males and females are yellow-brown. The legs are yellow and black in both sexes which distinguishes this species from Ruddy Darter where they are a sooty black. Common Darters will usually perch with their body horizontal on a plant or twig as illustrated.





Black-tailed Skimmer

A medium sized dragonfly with a pale blue abdomen with a black tip in the male and yellowish with a distinctive pattern in the female.

I will frequently settle on the bare ground or other horizontal surfaces and seems to avoid sites with lush vegetation around the pond and hence is often an early colonist of new ponds.