

HEDGEHOG FAQs

If you've got a garden, hedgehogs are useful visitors. They will eat slugs, beetles, caterpillars and a variety of other insects. Fossils suggest that hedgehog-like creatures have been on the earth for 15 million years.

How can I help hedgehogs in the garden?

To attract hedgehogs to your garden try to provide shelter - either 'naturally' by creating wild areas, or by placing a piece of board against a pile of bricks to form a shelter. Food and fresh water throughout the year will encourage visiting hedgehogs to return. They like to eat minced meat, fresh liver, dog or cat food (not fish based). Don't give bread and milk as it can give them the runs - clean fresh water is better, given in a shallow bowl.

What are the commonest threats to hedgehogs?

- Garden Ponds - make sure there is a way for them to get out - brick steps, or wire netting can be used.
- Strimmers - Use carefully under hedges in undergrowth in case animals are resting during the day.
- Drains - keep drains and other open holes covered and in good condition. If hedgehogs fall in they could starve before they are found and rescued.
- Litter - dispose of rubbish safely - small animals can get their head or feet stuck in plastic bottles and tins
- Nets - fruit nets should be kept taut to stop animals becoming ensnared, and nets for games such as football and tennis should be furled well above ground level.
- Bonfires - always check them before you light them.
- Slug Pellets - can poison hedgehogs; try using other methods like beer traps, or finely ground sand or shells around the plants you need to protect. If all else fails, place the pellets under a slate which is inaccessible.

Why do hedgehogs hibernate?

Animals hibernate to help them survive the winter months when there is little or no food for them. It usually happens between November and March or April, depending on the temperature in the locality. Hedgehogs build themselves a nest starting towards the end of autumn when they may choose the root of a tree, a spot under a hedge or in a pile of brushwood, old rabbit burrows or under garden sheds. The nest looks untidy, but is well made, from dry leaves, grass and other vegetation, and can be up to 50 cm thick.

What is an autumn orphan?

Hedgehogs born late in the season are not always robust enough to survive hibernation. They should weigh at least 450 gms (1 lb). Underweight ones can be housed in a shed or garage and fed as above, with the addition of small quantities of bran or crushed dog biscuits to provide bulk. They should be kept in a large box, with plenty of clean fresh hay, crumpled newspaper or dried leaves. Don't put them on a metal grid or wire floor - they have very sensitive feet. Once they reach the correct weight of between 450-680 gms (1-1.5 lbs), night-time release can be considered if the weather is comparatively mild and dry. Provide a shelter and nesting material.

Contact

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