



### Every garden provides a vital link for wildlife

Gardens are increasingly important havens for wildlife as habitats in the wider countryside shrink and fragment, and climate change takes its toll.

Up to a quarter of a city's area can be made up of gardens, so although each garden on its own may be small, together they form a patchwork linking urban green spaces with nature reserves and the wider countryside.

Our gardens represent a vast living landscape; and with an estimated 16 million gardens in the UK, the way they are managed can make a big difference to wildlife. Hedgehogs, sparrows, song thrushes and stag beetles are all declining species in the UK, but if we manage our gardens sympathetically for wildlife, these

creatures and many more will feel the benefits. So give it a go and watch as wildlife brings colour, movement and beauty to your garden.

Across gardens and beyond, The Wildlife Trusts' vision to create A Living Landscape involves enlarging, improving and joining-up areas of wildlife-rich land in all parts of the UK; on nature reserves, in towns and cities, and in partnership with hundreds of other land-owners.

There are now over 100 inspirational Living Landscape schemes around the UK, rich in opportunities for sustainability, learning, and better health and wellbeing. What is good for wildlife is good for people too.

# The Wildlife Trusts' Guide to Wildlife Gardening



### Further reading

Books published in association with The Wildlife Trusts. Available to buy from many Wildlife Trusts, bookshops and online retailers.

#### Wildlife Gardening for Everyone

A compendium of wildlife gardening advice jointly produced by The Wildlife Trusts and RHS. RRP £12.99

#### Birds in Your Garden

Advice from Wildlife Trust and RHS experts on turning your garden into a haven for birds. RRP £9.99

#### Concise Garden Wildlife Guide

One of a series of pocket-sized wildlife guides providing details on ID, habitat and behaviour for a variety of species. Other titles include Wild Flowers, Insects and Trees. RRP £4.99



### Help and advice

#### Wild About Gardens

Wildlife gardening information and advice from The Wildlife Trusts' partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society. [www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

#### Vine House Farm Bird Foods

The Wildlife Trusts are proud to work in partnership with Vine House Farm Bird Foods. As much seed as possible is grown on their conservation award-winning farm in Lincolnshire. By using Vine House Farm Bird Food you are supporting your local Wildlife Trust as 5% of your sale is donated to the Trust. [www.vinehousefarm.co.uk](http://www.vinehousefarm.co.uk)



### Join The Wildlife Trusts

You can make a **real difference** to our work to protect wildlife, from seahorses to ancient woodland, by becoming a member of your local Wildlife Trust. Children can join Wildlife Watch, our junior membership.

As well as learning more about your local wildlife and the special wildlife sites in your area, as a member you will receive magazines with wildlife news, find out about guided walks, volunteering opportunities, talks and other exciting wildlife events. **Above all, you will play a vital role in protecting wildlife under threat – both in our seas and on land.**



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To find out more about membership please visit [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org) or write to us at:

# Make room for wildlife... and feel the benefits



Wildlife-friendly gardening is about making a haven for you, as well as for wildlife. By gardening sympathetically for wildlife, you'll be rewarded by a truly natural outdoor space, where you can get in touch with the plants, animals and birds that make their home there.

The essentials of successful wildlife gardening are based on four things: trees, deadwood, water and variety of planting. Any one of these features will encourage wildlife to your garden

and help it to thrive there. The more of these features your garden contains, the greater the number and variety of animal species using the garden will be.



## Build a pond in your garden and enjoy wetland wildlife on your doorstep!

Spring is the best time to put in a new pond. Firstly, choose a sunny site away from overhanging trees. Dig out the space for your pond – making sure it is at least 77cm deep with shallow edges. This will enable your plants to take root and allow easy access for animals.

Remove any stones, then line the hole with sand, and old carpet if you have it, before laying a butyl rubber lining. To work out how much lining you'll need, use this calculation:

**Length of liner = length of pond + twice depth of pond + 60cm** (for overlap at edges)

**Width of liner = width of pond + twice depth of pond + 60cm** (for overlap at edges)

After putting the lining in, turn it under at the edges and cover with turf, then fill with water. Introduce native plants from the list above around one week later.

Don't take frogspawn from the wild and bring it to your pond. Instead, wait for word to get around that there's a new pond in the neighbourhood and watch as frogs, toads and newts populate it themselves.

## Handy hints for the wildlife gardener

- Resist the urge to tidy up in autumn! Seed heads left uncut will treat seed-eating birds to a free feast. Plant stems and leaves are a great place for creepy crawlies to shelter, and perennials left standing will help overwintering insects such as ladybirds.
- Slugs are part of the garden's cycle of wildlife, eaten by frogs, toads and hedgehogs. If slugs or snails are a problem to your tender plants, avoid using slug pellets based on metaldehyde or methiocarb. Investigate alternative methods to control them – for example pellets based on ferrous phosphate, or products that create barriers to slugs and snails such as copper bands or gritty sand.
- Diluted household detergent is effective against greenfly and blackfly, and is thought not to harm other insects.

## Common water plants suitable for small garden ponds

**Plants for the shallows and ledges** include yellow flag iris, water forget-me-not, water plantain, branched bur-reed and arrowhead.

**Floating leaved plants** include the fringed water-lily, water soldier and potamogeton.

**Plants that thrive in deeper water** include plant hornwort, water crowfoot, common water starwort, spiked water-milfoil, curled pondweed and willow moss.

**For the edge of the pond**, or if you have any marshy areas try meadowsweet, purple loosestrife, lady's smock, gipsywort, ragged robin, marsh marigold, brooklime, rushes and sedge.

### But please avoid the following invasive plants:

Australian swamp stonecrop, curly water weed, floating pennywort, parrot's feather, water fern, water primrose and Canadian pondweed; these will soon take over.

## Top tips for greening your garden

- Choose local seeds and plants that are suitable for your soil. Your local Wildlife Trust can advise you.
- Wild flowers belong in the wild – before buying, check plants, seeds and bulbs are labelled as being from cultivated stock.
- Save water. Install water butts under down pipes outside your house.
- Mulch your borders in spring to keep your soil moist in hot weather. Mulch them again in autumn to help absorb heavy winter rain and prevent flooding.

**Safety first:** If small children use or visit your garden you should include a barrier over or around the water such as a fence or rigid mesh (allowing 75mm squares for small animals and plants).

# Gardening for wildlife

## getting you started

Wildlife needs four things if it's to thrive in your garden – food, water, shelter and a place to breed. By providing some, if not all of these things, you will bring your garden to life. Here are some ideas to get you started and help you make a difference for wildlife, whatever the size of your garden.

### Butterfly gardens

Butterflies bring beauty to any garden. Attract them with nectar-rich flowers like verbena, scabious and ice-plant. Go for plants with simple flowers that make it easy for butterflies to get at the nectar. Avoid double-flowered varieties of plants which may have no nectar. Many cottage garden flowers are suitable. Plant in a sheltered sunny spot and don't forget to provide food plants for caterpillars too.

(See the box below for plant suggestions)

### Go organic

You can have an attractive and productive garden without using chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

You can make and use your own compost, encourage insect and slug-eating creatures and adapt natural processes to maintain your soil.

Gardeners' friends include frogs and toads, birds, and small mammals like bats and hedgehogs – all of which eat insects or slugs. Ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies feast on aphids.

### Native trees

Favour native trees, but remember other species can be good for wildlife too.

**Trees:** alder, ash, aspen, beech, birch, bird cherry and wild cherry, crab apple, field maple, hazel, holly, juniper, oak, Scot's pine, rowan, yew, whitebeam, willow, wych elm.

**Shrubs:** alder buckthorn, blackthorn, broom, buckthorn, dog-rose, dogwood, elder, guelder-rose, hawthorn, spindle.

### Climbing plants

Climbing plants on fences and walls make nesting and roosting sites for birds, and a haven for insects and small animals. Choose plants like quince and honeysuckle which have nectar-rich flowers followed by fruit. Make sure you have some evergreens too; ivy is especially valuable.

### Hedges

Hedges provide living space and food for all sorts of wildlife, as well as privacy and security for you. Good native choices include hawthorn, blackthorn, wild rose, holly, hazel and elder. In addition, berberis and pyracantha produce lots of berries for the birds.

### Peat-free gardening

Peat bogs are very special places for wildlife but, partly due to gardeners' demand for peat, nearly all have been destroyed in the UK. Help save our remaining bogs by using peat-free composts and mulches, such as chipped bark, leaf mould or coir. Contact The Wildlife Trusts for details of where to buy peat-free products.

### Cracks and crevices

Many plants grow on walls, including ivy-leaved toadflax, various ferns, red valerian and, of course, wallflower. Spiders and solitary bees like nooks and crannies, and rockeries will shelter many small creatures. Hollow stems left over the winter provide homes for insect larvae and pupae.

### Meadow magic

A meadow makes a wonderful alternative to plain grass on your lawn and brings vibrant colour to any garden. It can be difficult to make a meadow from scratch, especially as you need to reduce nutrient levels in your soil.

A good alternative is to plant meadow flowers as plugs into your lawn, but be prepared to alter your mowing pattern to allow the flowers to grow. Generally cowslip, ox-eye daisy, meadow cranesbill, yellow rattle, self-heal and meadow buttercup do well.

### Feeding birds

Different species of birds eat different things in different ways and places. Provide nuts, seeds, fat and kitchen scraps in feeders, trays and on the ground. Insect eaters will appreciate mealworms sprinkled on the ground or in fat. Move feeding places from time to time to guard against predators, disease and unwelcome visitors such as rats.

Remember that water is vitally important, so if you have a bird bath or pond keep it topped up and ensure it's ice-free on cold winter days.

### Bird boxes

Tits and nuthatches need boxes with a 28mm entrance hole, house sparrows around 32mm. Open-fronted boxes attract robins and flycatchers. Large open-fronted boxes high in trees may attract owls or kestrels.

Do not put boxes in full sun, and do site them away from places that predators might attack from, such as overhanging branches.

### Compost bins

Make your own natural fertiliser. Compost garden waste and vegetable kitchen scraps in a home-made box or bought compost bin. If you have limited space, you can still make compost in a small 'worm bin' in your house or back yard.

### Small gardens

A small space is not a barrier to gardening for wildlife; small, thoughtful changes can have a real impact when attracting wild creatures.

Remember that your space is three-dimensional, so make imaginative use of walls, roofs and other structures.

Be aware of your garden's space through summer and winter, so you can make best use of sun and shade for your chosen features.

Even the smallest of 'ponds' are valuable – old sinks and buckets can teem with wildlife, just by being thoughtfully placed and adapted.

Plant a window box or container with butterfly nectar plants such as lavender or marjoram – or night-scented stocks and tobacco plants for moths.

Make a small gravel garden planted with nectar-providing perennials such as scabious, or plant in spaces in a paved area.

### File of logs

A pile of logs in a shady corner will feed beetle larvae and shelter many other animals, including frogs, toads and slow worms. The rare stag beetle needs dead wood to breed in. Hedgehogs often hibernate in wood piles, so if you're having a bonfire, check for sleeping hedgehogs first.

### Nettle feeders

Nettles are the food plant of the caterpillars of some beautiful butterflies: red admiral, peacock, small tortoiseshell and comma. Butterflies prefer not to lay their eggs in the shade, so choose a sunny spot to grow your nettles.



Painted lady

### Butterfly

Meadow brown, hedge brown, marbled white, large skipper

Large and small white

Green veined white, orange tip

Brimstone

Common blue

Painted lady

### Food plant for caterpillar

Grasses including meadow grass, false brome, cocksfoot, Yorkshire fog

Wild/cultivated cabbages

Lady's smock, hedge garlic, hedge mustard

Alder buckthorn, purging buckthorn

Bird's foot trefoil

Thistles

### Nectar-giving plants for butterflies

**Spring** Primrose, aubretia, sweet rocket

**Summer** Lavender, cat mint, thyme, heliotrope, red valerian, hebe, buddleia, knapweed

**Autumn** Michaelmas daisy, sweet scabious, hyssop, ice-plant

**Moths** like night-scented stocks, honeysuckle, evening primrose and tobacco plants



Hedgehog