

Wildlife In Your Garden

How to make the most of your home
and garden, with wildlife in mind

Right where you belong

gleeson



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This leaflet has been designed to help you make the most of your home and garden, with wildlife in mind. We've included how best to attract local wildlife to your garden, and how to help it thrive.



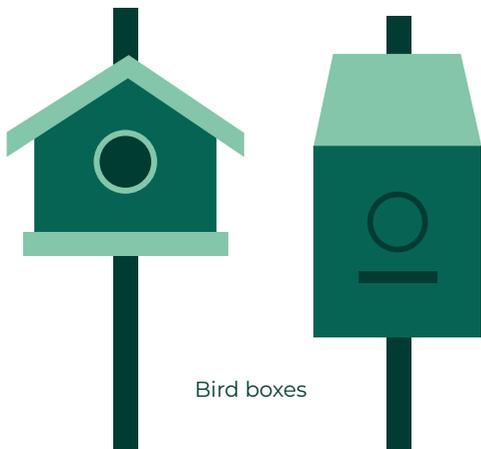
Bird boxes

A great way to attract birds to your garden in the spring is to provide a safe place to nest. Your home may already possess bird or bat boxes built into the brickwork, designed to attract species such as swifts, which is in national decline and in need of help. But if it doesn't, you can build your own box, we've included links on how to build a basic bird box in our 'Useful links' section at the end of this guide. Alternatively, you can purchase one from the RSPB or a garden centre. These may also help other species that are in decline, such as house sparrows or starlings, blue tits and great tits to your garden.

Once you are ready to erect your nest box, choose a location out of direct sunlight and heavy wind, ideally facing between north and east. We recommend placing it at a height of 2-3 metres above the ground, in a shrub, tree or on a fence post for most bird boxes. Some bird boxes, such as those for housemartin, swift and sparrow prefer their boxes higher such as under the roof soffit or eaves.

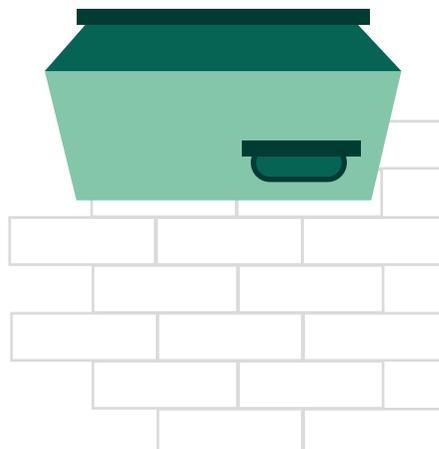
Remember

Clean out your nest box in the autumn to prevent the transmission of pests!



Bird boxes

Swift box



Ponds

A small pond in your rear garden is one of the best ways to attract wildlife to your garden and encourage a diverse range of species. From frogs and newts, who use them to breed in, to birds, who use them to drink and bathe in. There are several important things to remember when planning and building your pond.

- Planning permission is generally not required for a small garden pond, however, you must check with your Local Planning Authority.
- Be aware of and do not excavate or site your pond near underground services such as drainage pipes, electric cables and other infrastructure.
- Ensure your pond is located well away from the building and boundaries, generally more than 5m distance.
- Create a sloping slide or a ramp in the water, so animals can get in and out easily.
- Plant native plants around the edges and inside the pond.
- Place log or rock piles around the edge to provide shelter and habitat for animals.
- Don't place your pond in direct sunlight; partial shade is ideal.

If you don't have the space or capacity for a pond, why not consider a mini pond? This can be as simple as a large pot or container either dug into the ground or placed above ground - the same principles apply to your mini pond as its full-size counterpart!

Remember

Please note that garden ponds can be extremely hazardous and very careful consideration must be given prior to deciding to dig a pond, particularly where children can access. Ponds can be made safer by fencing off or using suitable rigid metal grille covers to prevent access.

Bird feeders

A bird feeder is a quick and easy way to attract wildlife to your garden. Bird feeders can be easily purchased, or you might even try to create your own using fat or suet as the food source. This mixture can be pushed into half coconuts, into the gaps on pinecones, or even into household plastic recycling such as yoghurt pots. Once hung up in the garden, these feeders are a great way to attract birds such as house sparrows and tits.



Remember

Don't forget to regularly clean your bird feeders to prevent the spread of disease between birds!

If you are just starting out, and looking at buying bird food, keep to a simple seed mix or peanuts, which can be placed in basic plastic or metal feeders. Place peanuts in a rigid mesh feeder to ensure only manageable pieces can be swallowed by small birds and their chicks. Sunflower hearts or nyger seed can be very popular with finches, such as goldfinches and siskins.

The placement of your feeders is important, try to place them close to cover, such as near a tree, but not too low down where the birds could be easily predated. During the spring and summer months, birds need lots of food to feed their chicks, and in winter natural food sources are more limited.

Don't be tempted to overfill your feeders, it's best to put a small amount in and top up when necessary. This will reduce pests and avoids the risk of old food going mouldy. Remember to clean your feeders regularly, to prevent the spread of diseases such as trichomonosis, which has affected large numbers of greenfinches in recent years, and always thoroughly wash your hands afterwards.

Don't forget to provide water as well. A shallow water dish or bird bath can be used for both drinking and bathing. However, don't forget to keep the water clean and not placed too close to dense cover.

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs, despite being one of the UK's best-loved native species, are showing serious population declines. Due to a loss of natural spaces, these animals are depending more and more on urban and suburban environments, and there is a lot we can do to encourage them into our gardens. Building a hedgehog house can provide a safe shelter and sleeping place for these nocturnal creatures. See the links section at the end of this leaflet for details on how to build one. It's important to

place the house in a quiet part of the garden, out of direct sunlight and rain, ideally within dense cover. Remember to give it a clean out once a year to prevent parasites (late March to early April is the best time for this, to ensure you don't disturb any hibernating hedgehogs!). If building a hedgehog house is not feasible, a log pile is a fantastic way to encourage hedgehogs into your garden. Not only does this provide a safe sleeping place for them, it also attracts lots of different insects that

Hedgehogs can travel up to 2km a night searching for food. Unfortunately, areas of development can obstruct these pathways and thus make it difficult for them to find enough food - this is easy to fix. Simply help by ensuring there are hedgehog highways in and out of your garden. A small hole (15cm high by 15cm wide) cut into the bottom of your garden fence is sufficient and will be too small for any pets to escape from. You can register your hedgehog highway at www.hedgehogstreet.org.uk.

If you are lucky enough to get hedgehogs visiting your garden, a shallow dish of water and a dish of meat-based cat food, wet or dry, will really help them out. For more information on supplementary hedgehog feeding, check out hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/feed-hedgehogs.



Wildlife friendly planting



Planting your garden with wildlife in mind provides both shelter and food to a wide range of species.

Wildflowers are a great place to start and are available from most garden centres and online - look for seed mixes containing cowslips, foxgloves, toadflax or harebells. You can also find wildflowers available in plug form and in ready to roll out turf. You can start with one flowerpot, which is a fantastic nectar resource for a range of insects, including bumblebees and butterflies. If you have the space for a lawn, a great option is to let the lawn grow long, or plant wildflower seeds in the bare soil. Night flowering plant species such as Jasmine, Honeysuckle, Evening Primrose are beneficial to moths.

Try to hold off mowing a chosen patch or corner of your lawn until it reaches a height of 20cm, which may only be once or twice a year, the fewer cuts the better! Have a look at the 'Useful links' section for more information on initiatives such as 'No Mow May' and 'Get Britain Buzzing' for more tips on how to attract and encourage insects into your garden.



Remember

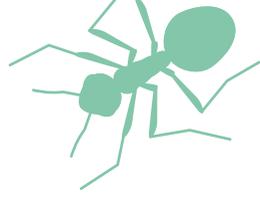
Food and shelter is required all year round, so use a combination of plants which provide these resources

Compost heaps provide an eco-friendly solution to your garden and kitchen waste disposal by providing a fantastic home for wildlife. As plant matter decomposes it gives off heat, this makes your compost heap a lovely warm home for animals such as grass snakes, which are known to lay their eggs in compost heaps. If you've also got a pond, you may see your resident grass snakes using that area of the garden as well.

If you are pushed for space, another option is to create a vertical plant wall. Specialised designs are available online, or this can be created using old pallets. Not only is this a great use of space, but it will also act as a sound buffer between you and your neighbours.

Top tip

Planting trees and shrubs would also be a great addition to your wildlife garden. Even small gardens can accommodate native trees and shrubs if you select the right species, and many grow happily in pots. If you're pushed for space have a look at planting species such as holly, rowan, and crab apple varieties.



Bug hotels

Let's not forget about the smallest visitors to our gardens: insects! These are vital to our garden ecosystems, and by ensuring our gardens support a wide range of insect species, we can attract more and more species higher up the food chain. The first step to attracting insects has been outlined above, through careful and selective planting. A great additional way to support these

insects is to provide shelter. The aim of these insect shelters (often referred to as "bug hotels") is to provide safe nooks and crannies to shelter in, especially during the harsh winter months. For example, the majority of UK bee species live a solitary life, not in the classic hive system. Other species you'll be likely to find in your bug hotel include: ladybirds, wasps, woodlice and lacewings.

Building a bug hotel can be as simple as tying a bundle of bamboo canes and sticks together and placing it in a sheltered area of your garden - you can make your bug hotel as extravagant as you want! Old bricks, logs, pallets, and wood with holes drilled into it are all great materials to construct your shelter with.



Useful links

Build Hedgehog Houses, Nest Boxes and Bug Hotels:

rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities

Help wildlife at home:

wildlifetrusts.org/actions

Wildlife friendly gardening:

rhs.org.uk/garden-design/design-withplants

No mow may:

plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay

Get Britain buzzing:

buglife.org.uk/campaigns/get-britain-buzzing-2

Buglife

buglife.org.uk

British Hedgehog Preservation Society

britishhedgehogs.org.uk

Bumble Bee Conservation Trust

bumblebeeconservation.org



Thank you to SLR for their assistance and support in helping us create this booklet

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