

How your garden can help wildlife



Provide water

A pond (without fish) will support a wide range of animals and provide a place for amphibians and dragonflies to breed, as well as becoming a focal point for wildlife within your garden. If a pond is not practical, go for a simple bird bath or pebble fountain to provide drinking water.

Leave perennials uncut until the spring

Seed heads can look really good when covered in frost and provide food for birds and other animals through the winter. Many perennials also have hollow stems that offer shelter for over-wintering insects.

Compost your organic kitchen and garden waste

The compost heap will provide welcome food and shelter for a range of animals, including hedgehogs and grass snakes, and provide a year-round source of food for others.

Grow climbing plants against walls, fences, etc., to create vertical habitat

Climbers provide great cover and food for birds, insects and mammals. Set trellises away from the wall or fence to allow ample room for nests.

Leave dead wood

Dead wood is a valuable habitat that supports a wide range of invertebrates, as well as providing shelter for amphibians and small mammals. You can collect cut or wind-blown wood and pile it up in shady corners.

Bird, bat and hedgehog boxes

Bird, bat and hedgehog boxes provide nesting, roosting, shelter and hibernation opportunities, and not just for the larger animals. Invertebrates can also benefit from the shelter. Collecting together some hollow stemmed plants and placing them in a quiet corner of your garden will also help.

Feed birds with nuts, mixed seeds, scraps and fat balls

If you start feeding, keep it up through the year, and always ensure any bird tables or feeders are kept clean. Make sure these feeders are close to shrubs

and trees for cover and near enough to the house so you can enjoy the daily dramas. Fat balls are also perfect if you have little outside space.

Leave parts of your lawn uncut

Leave part of your lawn uncut, perhaps where it borders a native hedge or runs down to the compost bin. Long grass is great for small animals like grasshoppers, beetles and young amphibians and provides cover for small mammals out foraging at night. Grasses are also important food sources for the caterpillars of some butterflies. Also consider introducing some wildflowers to these areas to increase diversity.

Use mulches to control weeds

Minimise your use of chemicals in the garden, especially slug pellets, by encouraging predators of common garden pests - frogs, toads and song thrushes all eat slugs and ladybirds, and lacewings love greenflies.

Encourage and develop a balance in your garden through planting a wide range of plants (some of which could be disease or pest resistant) in varied 'habitats'.

Grow a range of nectar-rich plants

Try to include as many varied plants as possible that will provide nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies and other pollinators throughout the flowering seasons. Having a variety of flower-types is important in order to cater for the different insect species. Consider too having some native shrubs or trees for the caterpillars of moth and butterfly species, while just a patch of nettles is ideal for the most common garden butterflies.