



Soil Association Guide to a wildlife-friendly garden

Hedgehog populations have fallen by a staggering 27 million in the last 60 years and our precious bees and other pollinators are going the same way. The good news is we can all do something to help by turning our gardens into wildlife-friendly spaces that can provide much needed habitat and food for foraging creatures.

- 1 Bird boxes can provide much needed safe shelter for birds and their young.
- 2 A damp, sheltered log pile is a great habitat for beetles and other insects. Beetles are extremely effective at reducing slug populations by feeding on them, and their eggs, whilst other insects provide an important source of food for birds.
- 3 Avoid slug pellets as they can damage wildlife. Scatter a protective trail of used coffee granules, garlic, oat bran and broken eggshells around your plants instead – slugs hate sliding over them!
- 4 A pond of any size can make a huge difference to the variety of wildlife in your garden. As well as attracting more species of insects to support birds and small mammals, a pond can bring frogs (who love to eat slugs), newts, toads, and larger birds to your garden.
- 5 Provide foraging for bees and other pollinators by planting a range of flowering plants and vegetables including wild flowers, lavender and ivy – a particularly important source of late winter food for bees.
- 6 Hedgehogs are notoriously shy, create much needed habitats such as piles of leaves for them to shelter and hibernate in. Usefully for gardeners they are insectivores and love to eat caterpillars and other garden pests!
- 7 Different species of trees, plants and flowers in your garden will provide a variety of food at different times of the year. Early and late flowering plants are particularly important to provide food in scarcer times.

Berry loaded bushes and fruit trees are a good source of food for birds, and hedges can provide great nest sites.

Leave cracks in garden walls and dry earth where solitary bees and bumblebees can nest.

Wildlife-friendly Gardening

Let your garden grow on the wild side, it's called wildlife for a reason! If you want to take it slowly, dedicate an area as a wilder garden, where longer grass can shelter creatures, insects won't be damaged, homes won't be trodden and native plants can settle in.

Aim to build a diverse and balanced ecosystem. Habitat-loss is a real problem for UK wildlife so getting a variety of habitats into your garden is really important and will attract a wide range of creatures.

Finally, don't be too tidy, embrace a longer lawn and learn to love a few weeds!

Pesticides in the garden

Many garden products contain harmful chemicals that are damaging to wildlife and are contributing to the decline in numbers. In particular, bees are suffering dramatic decline which has been linked to the use of neonicotinoid insecticides which are widely used in farming (although they are banned in organic farming). They are also found in a number of garden products such as bug sprays!



Instead, when it comes to tackling certain pests in your garden, swap harmful chemicals for bee-friendly biological replacements such as nematodes for vine weevil or BT (*Bacillus Thuringiensis*) for cabbage whites. Biological replacements should be an effective way to keep these specific pests at bay.

Find out what products to avoid at
www.soilassociation.org/householdpesticides

Take a tip from an organic farmer:

'Red and white clover are mainstays of organic farming systems for very good reasons. They are really good at helping maintain healthy soil, so they'll be great for your garden too, but the really fantastic thing about them is that bees love feasting on their pollen! Red clover is one of the bumble bees favourite foods (its traditional name 'Bee Bread' says it all) whilst White clover is particularly attractive to Honeybees because their shorter tongues are better suited to it!'



Things to avoid

- Avoid the use of peat in your garden, it's a non-renewable resource and often it will have been extracted from a wild natural habitat, damaging that ecosystem and the wildlife depending on it.
- Slug pellets can be harmful to hedgehogs and birds so aim for a natural defence system. In particular avoid anything that contains a harmful ingredient called 'metaldehyde'.
- Uncertified wooden furniture: Make sure your wooden garden furniture is FSC certified, then you can be sure it's come from a responsibly managed woodland.

Choose organic wherever possible for wonderful wildlife

Organic farmers use many of these techniques, making their farms havens for wildlife. Studies have shown wildlife is 50% more abundant on organic farms, with up to 30% more species overall! When it comes to your food shopping you can choose to support wildlife-friendly organic farming by looking for organic products. From fruit, to bread, to milk and cotton clothing, if you choose organic you can rest assured it's been produced with respect for wildlife.



Look for the Soil Association symbol when you shop.

Help UK wildlife get back on its tiny feet by becoming an Organic Wildlife Warrior from just £2.50 a month. We're looking for **1,000 Organic Wildlife Warriors** to support our work for wonderful wildlife.

Find out more and sign up at
www.soilassociation.org/wildlifewarrior



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