



# Creating a Wildlife Garden



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# CREATING A WILDLIFE GARDEN

The creation of a wildlife garden, or a wildlife area in your garden, will attract a diversity of wild creatures and go some way toward redressing the balance of human interference with nature, which has destroyed so many habitats in the countryside. Also, by helping hedgehogs, birds, bats, frogs and toads to survive the winter and providing places for them to raise their young, you will be rewarded by their helping to keep garden pests under control.

Your wildlife garden could include several (or all) of the following features:

**WOOD PILE:** Hedgehogs might build a nest underneath and, if left undisturbed for some time, algae and mosses will cover it, attracting insects. They will, in turn, be fed on by larger garden creatures. The dark interior may also encourage slow worms (another predator of garden pests) to seek shelter.

**COMPOST HEAP:** Birds will feed off the mini-beasts that congregate in a compost heap, as will hedgehogs and toads that may nest in its centre. A word of warning though, before using the compost test the base and sides gently for sleeping wildlife.

**HEDGES INSTEAD OF FENCES:** Flowering hedges provide flowers and fruits for wildlife, nesting places for birds and cover for hedgehogs, voles and shrews. They are also much more attractive than fences. Recommended hedging species: beech, holly (evergreen winter shelter for roosting birds), buckthorn, dog rose, hazel, goat willow, hawthorn, berberis. If you do have solid fences or walls, please create "Hedgehog Highways" in the bottom - 13 x 13cm (5" x 5") square gaps for the hedgehogs to use to access your garden. Hedgehogs travel around a mile a night and that's a lot of gardens! The gardens all need to join up if the hedgehogs are to use them so encourage your neighbours to do the same.

**WILDFLOWERS & SUITABLE PLANTS:** Flowers provide nectar and pollen to feed insects such as butterflies, hoverflies and bees and wildflower-rich grassland is a great habitat for many kinds of wildlife. It is usually best to plant wildflowers from seed or as plugs (it is illegal to take them from the wild). Buy seeds and plants of British origin from a reputable supplier.

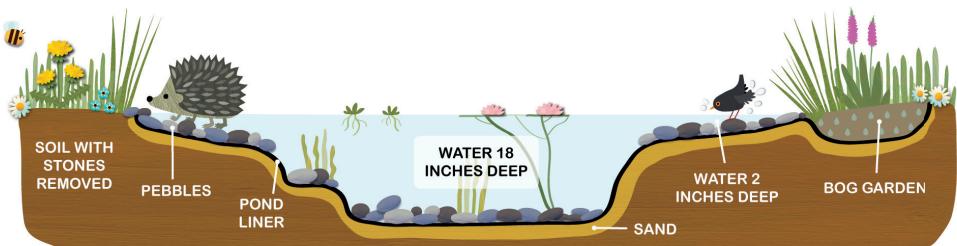
There are many books and other information sources providing guidance as to which species of wildflowers and other plants may be right for your garden. However, The Wildlife Gardening Forum (<http://wlgf.org>) provides up to date information and advice including lists of plants to avoid and prohibited species.



**WILD CORNER:** Allow nettles and weeds to take over a (preferably sunny) corner or edge of your garden. They will provide privacy for small creatures and food for caterpillars.

**ROCKERY:** Toads, newts and female frogs usually spend winter on land, under rockery stones (or in a log pile). Recommended rock plants: aubretia, hardy geraniums, ivies, sedums, sempervivum and wild thyme.

**MINI-POND/BOG GARDEN:** An area of water attracts a multitude of creatures including frogs, toads, newts, diving beetles, water scorpions and thirsty hedgehogs. Choose an area away from trees (especially sycamore). One side of the pond should gradually slope to allow hedgehogs and other creatures an exit. Butyl rubber pond liners are recommended. Around at least one third of the pond perimeter should include a shelf that is only 5-6cms below the normal water level. Put stone-free soil on top of the shelf and introduce some native water plants. There are many books and other information sources providing guidance as to which species of water plants may be right for your pond. However, The Wildlife Gardening Forum (<http://wlgf.org>) provides up to date information and advice including lists of plants to avoid and prohibited species.



If you don't want a pond, perhaps because of small children, an area of bog garden will provide interesting drinking point for wildlife. Line a shallow depression in the soil with pond liner, fill two thirds with soil to hold water, your bog garden could be a wonderful refuge for amphibians and support many plants that like a wet soil including: meadowsweet, yellow loosestrife, purple loosestrife, marsh marigold, ragged robin, cuckoo flower, cotton grass, bog pimpernel, creeping jenny and many others.

**HEDGEHOG, BIRD & BAT BOXES:** Providing nesting boxes for hedgehogs, birds and bats might encourage these creatures to reside in your garden, though tenancy cannot be guaranteed! Place bird and bat boxes in trees with cover, but if you have no trees fix them on walls or fences, preferably in the cover of foliage from a climbing plant, and well away from the reach of cats and other predators. Hedgehog boxes should be sited in a quiet spot hidden by ground covering plants, low shrubs or tree branches. To purchase ready made boxes contact each relevant organisation: Bat Conservation Trust ([www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)), British Hedgehog Preservation Society ([www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk)). Instruction sheets for making your own boxes can also be acquired from these organisations.

**BIRD BATH AND TABLE:** A bird bath provides birds with somewhere to drink and bathe (feather cleaning is essential) and a bird table holding a variety of foods will attract various feathered friends. Peanuts in dispensers are favoured by Blue Tits, Coal Tits and Great Tits, but Greenfinches, Nuthatches, Siskins and even Woodpeckers might be seen pecking at the nuts. Seeds and specially purchased bird food sprinkled on the table will attract Finches, Robins, Sparrows and Starlings. Half a fresh coconut provides much needed energy for small birds. Once the shell is empty it can be used to hold a bird cake mix (recipe available from RSPB).

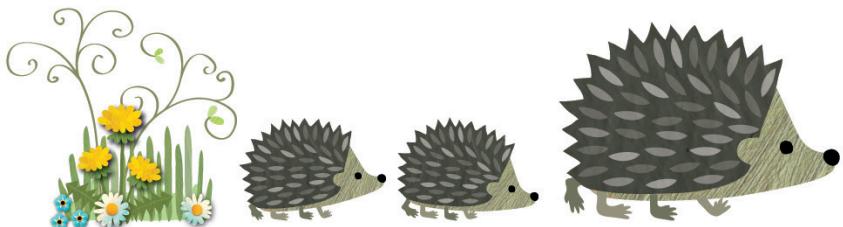
**DO NOT USE** pesticides or slug pellets in your garden or you will kill off species that are important links in the food chain. Also, you run the risk of killing those creatures you do not wish to harm, as pesticides tend to be indiscriminate and they, and slug pellets, might kill hedgehogs. It is illegal to use metaldehyde slug pellets in the UK. If you are overrun with slugs you could try beer traps (pots of beer placed at the bottom of plants into which the slugs fall or climb). Or the skin of half a grapefruit placed on the ground like a dome. You can also protect precious plants with a ring of sharp sand, coffee grounds or crushed eggshells around the base. Copper bands and tape can also be used around the base of plants or pots. We have had people reporting success using wool pellets and nematodes too.

Now, sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labour! Spend time in your wildlife garden just looking, and get to know the many and varied creatures that share it with you.

Further recommended reading: The Natural Gardening Book by Peter Harper (Gaia Books Ltd), Creating a Wildlife Garden by Bob & Liz Gibbons (Hamlyn), The National Trust Book of Wild Flower Gardening by John Stevens (Dorling Kindersley).

You may also like to look at the website of the Henry Doubleday research association at [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

*We thank 'The Future is Unmown' for allowing us to use their wonderful illustrations in this leaflet.*



#### ***Mission Statement:***

- a. To provide advocacy and an expert source of information and advice to the public, businesses, government and other organisations regarding the conservation and welfare of native hedgehogs and their habitats in the British Isles and seek further legal protection of the hedgehog as necessary.*
- b. To encourage people to respect hedgehogs and other wildlife by providing information and supporting educational activities.*
- c. To fund research that helps build a better understanding of the British hedgehog population and its sustainability.*
- d. To give advice to the public concerning the welfare of wild hedgehogs particularly when injured, sick, treated cruelly, orphaned or facing other challenges.*

*For further information please send a s.a.e. to:-*

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