



I would like a hedgehog for my garden - where can I get one?



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I WOULD LIKE A HEDGEHOG FOR MY GARDEN – WHERE CAN I GET ONE?

People love hedgehogs – so we are constantly asked this question! The answer depends very much on what your garden is like, and if your local independent hedgehog rehabilitator has any hedgehogs to release, bearing in mind that hedgehogs should always be released where they were found whenever possible.

**PLEASE DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO TAKE A HEDGEHOG FROM THE WILD
IT MAY WELL HAVE DEPENDENT YOUNG IN A NEST THAT WILL SLOWLY
STARVE TO DEATH WITHOUT THE ADULT.**

IF YOUR GARDEN IS ESCAPE PROOF:

An escape proof area IS NOT suitable for a healthy hedgehog. Hedgehogs can often travel up to 2 miles in a night, so to trap them in a smaller area, with no mate, and not enough natural food would be cruel. However, some rescue centres do still release 'disabled' hedgehogs into secure gardens. This may be a blind hedgehog, or one that has had an amputation, and would struggle to survive in the wild. These hedgehogs don't come along very often, as the majority of the casualties can and should be returned to the wild, where they were found originally. So be prepared to wait! Our information leaflet for rescues "Guidance for Releasing Rehabilitated Hedgehogs" is available on our website in the rehabilitators area or we can provide paper copies by request.

Hedgehogs are good at getting in and out of gardens, so to be escape proof would mean high solid walls on all sides with no gaps and no climbing plants that they can use as a scrambling net to climb up the wall. Please bear in mind that there is a great responsibility with caring for a disabled hedgehog in an enclosed garden as it will need feeding every night (the garden alone will not offer enough food) this needs to be considered when taking holidays, etc. The quality of life and the stress of captivity for such a hedgehog should also be considered, no matter how well-meaning, ultimately keeping a hedgehog in an enclosed garden is caging a wild animal.

IF YOUR GARDEN IS OPEN:

If your garden isn't escape proof and hedgehogs can access lots of other gardens, it may be a suitable place to release healthy hedgehogs, though there is no guarantee they will stay there! Hedgehog rehabilitators should always release a hedgehog where it was found. If there are exceptional circumstances that make

that impossible they should only release rehabilitated hedgehogs where there is already a healthy hedgehog population as this demonstrates the area is suitable for them.

Here are a few things to consider:

- **Ponds or pools** should be easily escapable. A sloping edge or half-submerged rocks or wire mesh that can be used as a scrambling net will help, as will keeping pond and pool levels topped up; hedgehogs can swim well, but struggle to get out of steep slippery-sided ponds and pools. It is wise to check ponds for casualties every morning.
- **Dogs** can be a problem for hedgehogs. If you have a dog that is very territorial and likely to attack hedgehogs, obviously your garden won't be suitable. If there are neighbours with such dogs this should be considered, as hedgehogs will need to travel around your area, not just your garden.
- **Predators** that are capable of killing a hedgehog, like badgers, can cause problems with populations locally. While we cannot guarantee a predator-free area anywhere in the UK, rehabilitators would not want to release a hedgehog that they have probably spent a great deal of time and money on into an area where predators are prolific.
- **Roads** are a problem for hedgehogs; no doubt you will have seen many dead on roads in your lifetime. Again, we cannot find release sites that have no roads within the area the hedgehogs will roam, but if you live right next to a busy road, your garden isn't ideal.
- **Slug Pellets, Pesticides and Poisons** can potentially kill hedgehogs, and certainly damage the food chain they rely upon. So if you or neighbours use these chemicals, it wouldn't be considered a suitable area to release a hedgehog.

For more tips on making your garden safe for hedgehogs see BHPS leaflets "Creating a Wildlife Garden" and "Gardening 'with' Hedgehogs".

If after careful consideration you still think your open garden is suitable and you do already have hedgehogs in your area, or have an enclosed garden to offer, please get in touch with BHPS for details of your local independent hedgehog rehabilitator. It is worth bearing in mind that hedgehog rehabilitators are usually individuals who spend a lot of their own time and money rehabilitating hedgehogs. Please show consideration for their time and remember the welfare of the hedgehogs is paramount, so rehabilitators use their time caring for or collecting their patients first and returning calls from people wanting to offer homes for hedgehogs second.

In the meantime try to encourage your local hedgehogs into your garden naturally. Ensure there is easy access in by creating 13cm (5") square gaps at the bottom of boundaries. Put out meaty hedgehog food, meat based pet food or cat biscuits. Offer fresh water to drink. It is a good idea to provide feeding stations for visiting hedgehogs so that cats and other animals don't steal the food.

To make a feeding station for hedgehogs, use either a plastic storage box or child's toy box or similar and cut a 13cm x 13cm (5"x5") hole in one of the short sides. Place this over the food, like a tunnel, and the hedgehog can get through the hole to the food but the cats can't. A brick on top should stop the box being pushed aside. A brick approx 13cm (5") in front of the entrance will stop a cat lying down and scooping the food out with a paw! Finally you may like to buy or make a hedgehog home to offer as a hibernation or nesting site. See BHPS leaflet "Hedgehog Homes" and our Hogalogue gift catalogue or online shop.

My local hedgehog rehabilitator is:

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