

The Wildlife Trusts' Guide to

# Wildlife Gardening



# Make room for wildlife...



# ...and feel the benefits



## Wildlife-friendly gardening is about making a haven for you, as well as for wildlife.

By gardening for wildlife, you'll be rewarded by a truly natural outdoor space, where you can enjoy the plants, animals and birds that make their home there.

The essentials of successful wildlife gardening are based on four things: trees, deadwood, water and variety of planting. Any of these features will encourage wildlife to your garden.

### Handy hints for the wildlife gardener

- Resist the urge to tidy up in autumn! Seed heads left uncut will be enjoyed by birds. Plant stems and leaves are a great place for creepy crawlies to shelter. Perennials left standing will help overwintering insects such as ladybirds.
- Slugs are part of the garden's cycle of wildlife, eaten by frogs, toads and hedgehogs. If slugs or snails are a problem avoid using slug pellets based on metaldehyde or methiocarb as this will get into the food chain. Investigate alternative methods – for example pellets based on ferrous phosphate,

or products that create barriers such as copper bands or gritty sand.

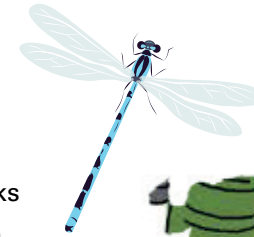
- Diluted household detergent is effective against greenfly and blackfly and is thought not to harm other insects.
- Save water. Install water butts under downpipes outside your house.
- Mulch your borders in spring to keep your soil moist in hot weather. Mulch them again in autumn to help absorb heavy winter rain and prevent flooding.

# Make a wildlife pond



## You will need

- A plank of wood
- A spirit level
- Butyl pond liner
- Pond plants
- A spade
- Sand
- Water
- Large rocks



Don't add fish or a pump. Fish will eat the smaller life forms while the pump may suck them up.

Look for a spot with plenty of sun, with shade in the afternoon. Avoid nearby trees.



Choose your spot. Draw your pond outline and dig it out, including some shallow areas. Use a plank and a spirit level to ensure that the edges are level.



REMEMBER THAT DEEP PONDS CAN BE A HAZARD TO CHILDREN

Fill the pond up with water. If you fill it from a tap or hose your water might turn green - don't worry, this is just the minerals.



Coat the hole with sand (to protect the liner from sharp stones).



Leave your pond to settle for about a week before adding your plants.



Make a trench all around the edge of your pond, and lay the edge of the liner into this. Weigh it down with large rocks.



Watch and see what wildlife visits. Consider adding a plank of wood as a ramp to help any wildlife that may have fallen in.





# WHAT WILL YOU PLANT FOR WILDLIFE?

One of the best actions we can take for the climate is planting more flowers, trees and plants as well as growing our own produce! you've got a big green back garden, or a charming balcony perfect for a container garden, go potty with us this autumn!

## THREE EASY STEPS...

1. Find an old container, anything will do
2. Plant seed in peat free compost
3. Water and watch it grow!

Autumn is the perfect time to sow seeds for spring flowers!



Find out more at [www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/gopotty](http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/gopotty)

### Win a beaver adoption pack!

All you have to do is send us a photo of your most creative pot design!

We don't mind if your pot is full of flowers or just the peat free compost and seeds, we just want to find Staffordshire's pottiest idea! Head to the webpage below for more info!

[www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/gopotty](http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/gopotty) competition



## GROW YOUR OWN GRUB

You don't just have to plant for wildlife, why not try growing some grub for you too!

All you need is your pot, peat free compost & seeds and you are ready to go. Plant it up, watch it grow and take a bite!

There is lots of produce you can grow over autumn. Lettuce, garlic, turnips, spinach, rocket and mustard can all be planted now so get digging!



wildlife watch

## How to grow your own oak tree

### What you need:

- Some acorns
- a plant pot (or big yoghurt pot/ice cream tub)
- Some stones or gravel
- soil or peat-free Compost

Remember to thoroughly water it during summer!

- 1 Collect acorns in the autumn. Sort them out - healthy acorns will sink to the bottom of a bowl of water
- 2 Layer stones/gravel in the pot, then fill with soil/compost
- 3 Plant an acorn by pushing it into the soil with your finger

cover with soil

acorn out of cup pointed end up

the first leaves should appear in the first spring

minibeasts love oak trees... one adult oak tree can be home to 284 different species of insect

plant out in the second spring



# Spotting garden wildlife

Tick off the wildlife you spot in your garden this autumn

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Blue tit



Great tit



Long-tailed tit



House Sparrow



Robin



Moss



Ivy



Holly berries



Crab apples



Empty nests



Nuthatch



Chaffinch



Goldfinch



Song thrush



Starling



Spider web



Garden spider



Zebra spider



Earth worm



Wood louse



Black bird



Jackdaw



Crow



Great spotted woodpecker



Wood pigeon



Harvestman



Ladybird



Common darter



Migrant hawk



Cranefly



Rose hip



Lichen



Hawthorn berries



Rowan berries



Yew berries



Hoverfly



Marmalade hoverfly



Leopard slug



White lipped snail



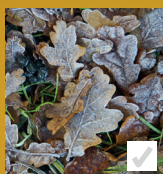
Jelly ear fungus



Horse chestnut



Seeds



Fallen leaves



Acorns



Autumn colours



Turkeytail fungus



Rabbit



Mole



Grey squirrel



Hedgehog

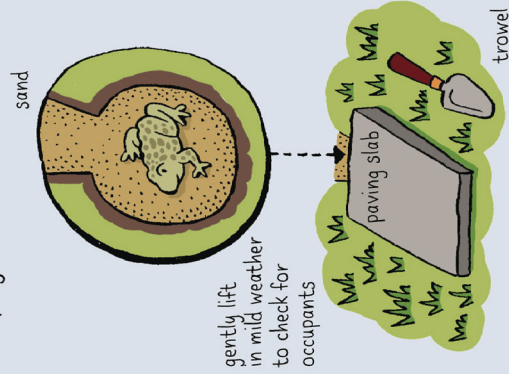


# How to build hidey holes



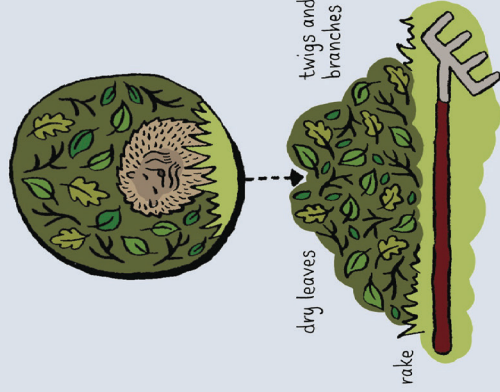
## For amphibians

In a damp, cool area of the garden, dig a shallow bowl in the ground and line with sand. Cover with a slab, leaving enough room for an upward sloping tunnel.



## For hedgehogs

Rake a pile of dry leaves in a quiet, unused corner of the garden (under a bush is best). Build a mesh of twigs and branches around the pile, and leave an entrance space at the bottom.



## For minibeasts

Stack up a log pile as the bottom layer and cover with rubble or bricks (air bricks have ready made hidey holes!) Cover the pile with branches and garden cuttings.

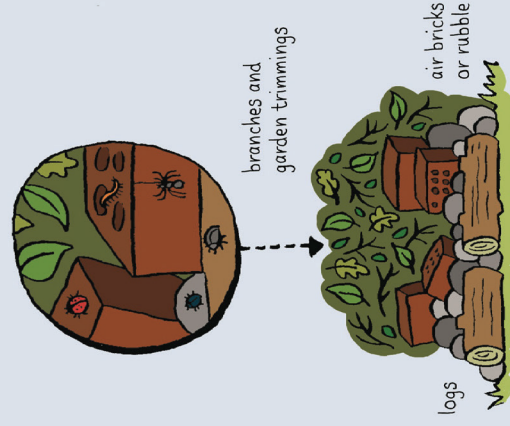


Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2015

[www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk)

# Top Tips for Climate Friendly Gardening

Some of the most helpful changes you can make in your garden to protect the climate involve adjusting how we consume energy and water.

- Switch to peat free compost, or better yet make your own compost at home.
- Plant lots of flowers or maybe even a tree. The best sort are the native species like hawthorn and hazel.
- Grow, don't mow! Leave a wild patch for any critters. This can even include a "sacrificial" plant for your slug and snail friends.
- Ditch the artificial grass and get wild with the real deal, soil and living-breathing plants.
- Upcycle - don't buy new plastic pots. Reuse materials in your home, or materials from the garden. For example a dead hedge or bug hotel made from tree trimmings.
- Watch out for nasty chemicals on shop brought products, soap and water is plenty good for most things.
- Replace outdoor light bulbs with high efficiency LED or use solar powered lighting to give your garden a friendly glow.
- Help create a nature highway so wildlife can flourish. Connecting back gardens with a small hole in everyone's fence will allow wildlife to move about and reconnect fragmented landscapes.
- Collect rain water in a water barrel as opposed to turning on the hosepipe.
- Use hand tools instead of petrol powered where possible - it's good for the environment and it's a good workout too!







# How to

## Prepare your garden for winter in a wildlife friendly way

### 1 Take stock of what you've got

This includes tasks like:

- Identifying which plants need trimming back or cleared away
- Identifying what seeds you can harvest.
- Assess what cleaning work you have to do
- Planning / planting for next year



CHRISTINE HARDING



### 2 Tidy in autumn, purge in winter

Start with a tidy and do more intense work during winter.

Leave plants to go to seed. The benefits are two-fold, wildlife in your garden gets a tasty treat, and you get free seeds. As these seeds come straight from your garden, their carbon footprint is low.

Clear annual plants which have finished producing seeds in autumn, and trim down appropriate perennial plants. Leave cutting back trees and shrubs for winter when the temperature is cooler and plants are less likely to get illness.



### Keep an eye out for prickly friends

Remember to check bonfire and leaf piles for sleepy hedgehogs. If you find one, scoop it up with as much of its warm nest as possible and move it to a sheltered area in your garden.

Hedgehogs can wake up to find food or water, so making sure they have access to it in your garden helps a lot!



JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

### 3 Clean in a nature friendly way

Clean garden tools and pots reduce the chance of spreading plant disease around your garden and other green spaces.

Start by letting any mucky items dry (rakes, boots, spades, etc).

Once your items are dry, use a brush to get off the worst of the mess. Then wipe down tools and soles of shoes with warm soapy water (dish soap is fine).

Remember to dry off tools and lubricate them afterward so they don't go rusty, and you need to buy new ones. Historically this would have been done with oil or grease.

If you rake leaves, try composting them at home. This means they don't need to be transported, and cuts back on carbon footprint.

You can also leave some leaves on your garden beds. This provides a place for invertebrates and small mammals to shelter during the colder months, and can reinvigorate your garden soil over the next few growing seasons.

### Planting bulbs for spring

Autumn is the perfect time to be planning spring and summer bulbs because the soil is still warm, and they can take root; storing up energy over winter. This includes flowers such as tulips, daffodils, crocus, and hyacinths, but also summer flowers like alliums and lilies.



ROSS HODDINOTT/2021VISION



# How to make a hedgehog highway



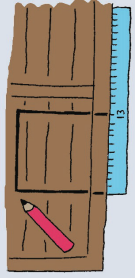
## You will need

- A fence panel
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Coping saw
- Sandpaper

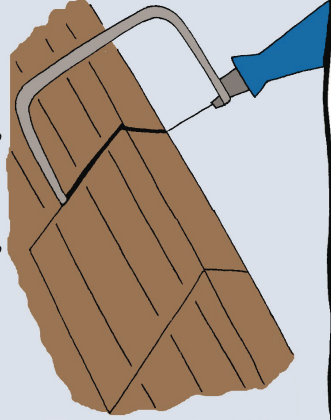


1 If your neighbour is happy, remove your fence panel.

2 Measure and mark a 13cm x 13cm hole at the bottom of the panel.



3 Ask an adult to help you cut the hole using the coping saw.



Talk to your neighbour! It's important to get their consent to cut a hole in the fence - explain that hedgehogs need to access between gardens to access enough food.

4 If there are any very rough edges, use the sand paper to smooth them down.



5 Put your fence panel back. Your hedgehog highway is now open for business!

You could set up your own trail cam to watch and see if any animals are using your highway.

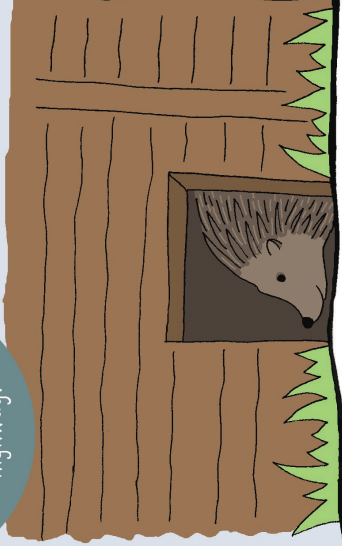
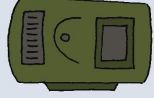


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[www.wildlifewatch.org.uk](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk)

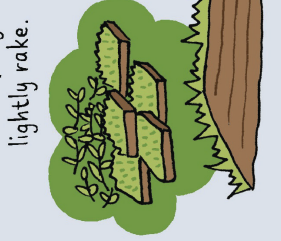


# Grow your own mini garden meadow



## You will need:

- Spare patch of the garden an area that hasn't had fertiliser or compost added
- Packet of meadow flower seeds
- Grass seed
- Handful of sand
- Rake
- Shears
- Twiggy branches



1 Remove grass, weeds and the top layer of soil, then lightly rake.



2 Mix together 1 part wildflower seed with 4 parts grass seed and some sand.



this will help you see where you're sowing

3 Sprinkle your seed mix in spring or autumn.



4 Walk over the soil and water lightly.

5 Arrange branches over your seeds to keep animals out.



6 Cut in summer to 5-10cm high and compost the cuttings.

Don't take seeds from the wild - always buy specially-grown seeds.



Cornfield annuals will flower in the first year. Perennial meadows often need two years.

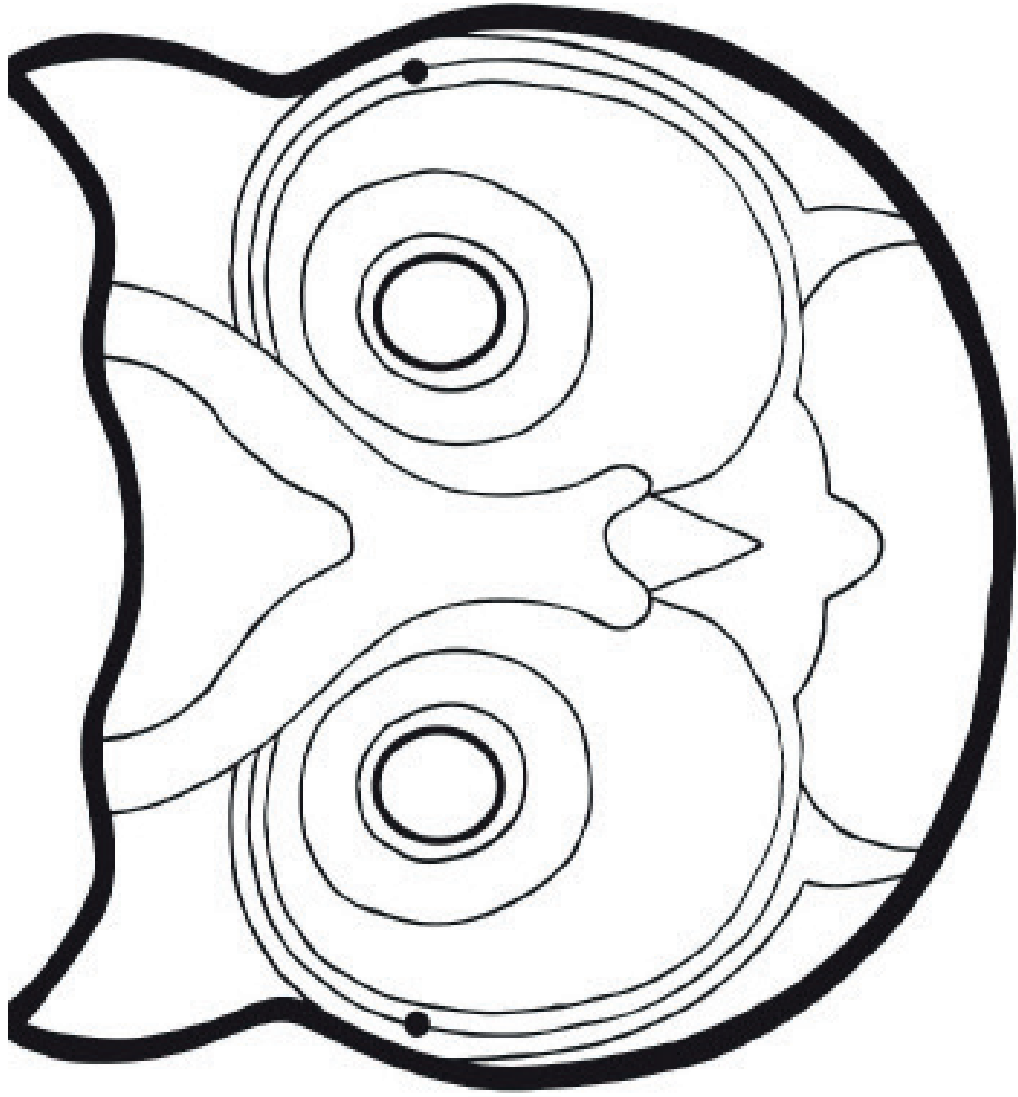
5g of seed per metre<sup>2</sup> of soil

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[www.wildlifewatch.org.uk](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk)



# Make your own owl mask



## Make a Christmas wreath for birds



### You will need:

- Pines cones
- Long twigs
- Garden wire
- Soft lard
- Mixing bowl
- Holly and other leaves
- Bird seed, breadcrumbs and grated cheese
- Dried fruits or unsalted nuts

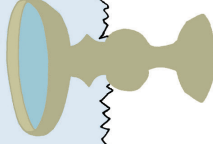
**1** Twist together bundles of long twigs and fasten with wire into a ring.

**2** Squish lard into a soft paste in a bowl. Mix in bird seed, breadcrumbs or grated cheese.



**3** Smear over pine cones and decorate with dried fruits and nuts.

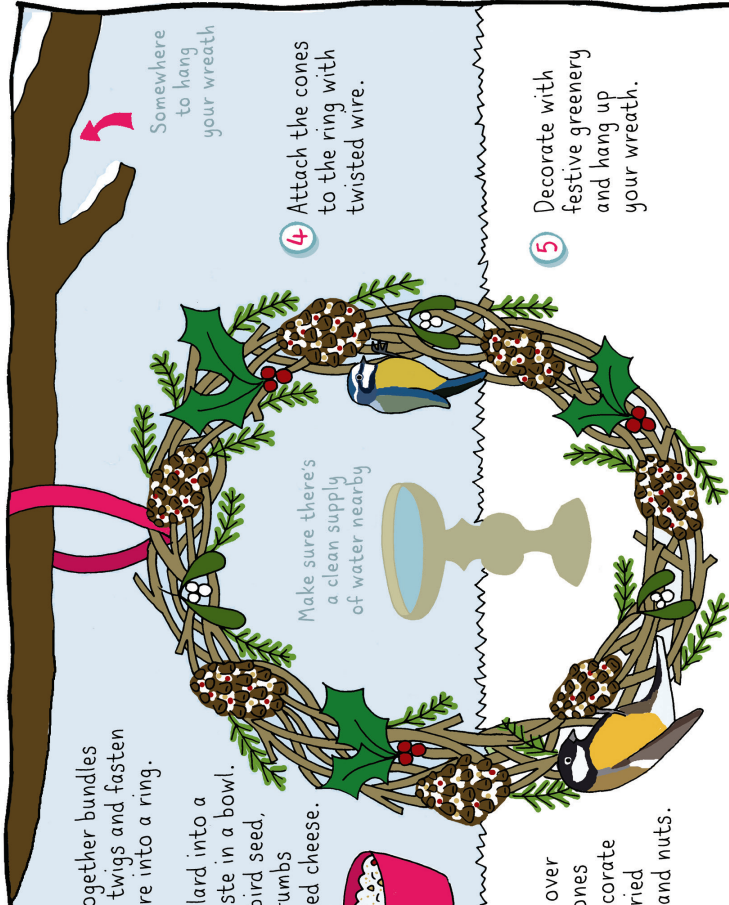
Make sure there's a clean supply of water nearby



Somewhere to hang your wreath

**4** Attach the cones to the ring with twisted wire.

**5** Decorate with festive greenery and hang up your wreath.





# Gardening for wildlife

## Getting started

Wildlife needs four things – food, water, shelter and a place to breed. By providing these things you will bring your garden to life.

## Butterfly gardens

Attract butterflies with nectar-rich flowers like verbena, scabious and ice-plant. Go for plants with simple flowers that make it easy for butterflies to get at the nectar. Many cottage garden flowers are suitable. Plant in a sheltered sunny spot and don't forget to provide food plants for caterpillars too. (See the box below for plant suggestions)

Butterfly species	Food plant for caterpillar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meadow brown</li><li>• Gatekeeper</li><li>• Marbled white</li><li>• Large skipper</li></ul>	Grasses including meadow grass, false brome, cocksfoot, Yorkshire fog
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large and small white</li></ul>	Wild/cultivated cabbages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Green-veined white</li><li>• Orange-tip</li></ul>	Lady's smock, hedge garlic, hedge mustard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brimstone</li></ul>	Alder buckthorn, purging buckthorn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Common blue</li></ul>	Bird's foot trefoil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Painted lady</li></ul>	Thistles

## Climbing plants

Climbing plants on fences and walls make nesting and roosting sites for birds, and a haven for insects and small animals. Choose plants like quince and honeysuckle

which have nectar-rich flowers followed by fruit. Make sure you have some evergreens too - ivy is great!

## Go organic

Encourage insect and slug-eating creatures instead of using pesticides. Gardeners' friends include frogs and toads, birds, and small mammals like bats and hedgehogs – all of which eat insects or slugs. Ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies feast on aphids.

## Hedges

Hedges provide living space and food for all sorts of wildlife. Good native choices include hawthorn, blackthorn, wild rose, holly, hazel and elder. Berberis and pyracantha also produce lots of berries for the birds.

## Native trees

Favour native trees. Here are some species good for wildlife.

**Trees:** alder, ash, aspen, beech, birch, bird cherry and wild cherry, crab apple, field maple, hazel, holly, juniper, oak, Scot's pine, rowan, yew, whitebeam, willow, wych elm.

**Shrubs:** alder buckthorn, blackthorn, broom, buckthorn, dog-rose, dogwood, elder, guelder-rose, hawthorn, spindle.

## Peat-free gardening

Peat bogs are very special places for wildlife but, partly due to gardeners' demand for peat, nearly all have been destroyed in the UK. Help save our remaining bogs by using peat-free composts and mulches, such as chipped bark, leaf mould or coir.

## Nectar-giving plants for butterflies

### Spring:

Primrose, aubretia, sweet rocket

### Summer:

Lavender, cat mint, thyme, heliotrope, red valerian, hebe, buddleia, knapweed

### Autumn:

Michaelmas daisy, sweet scabious, hyssop, ice-plant

## Small gardens

A small space is not a barrier to gardening for wildlife; small changes can have a real impact.

- Make imaginative use of walls, roofs and other structures.
- Even the smallest of 'ponds' are valuable – old sinks and buckets can teem with wildlife.
- Plant a window box or container with butterfly nectar plants such as lavender or marjoram – or night-scented stocks and tobacco plants for moths.
- Make a small gravel garden planted with nectar-providing perennials such as scabious, or plant in spaces in a paved area.

## Cracks and crevices

Many plants grow on walls, including ivy-leaved toadflax, various ferns, red valerian and, of course, wallflower. Spiders and solitary bees like nooks and crannies, and rockeries will shelter many creatures.

## Feeding birds

Provide nuts, seeds and fat balls in feeders, trays and on the ground. Insect eaters will appreciate mealworms sprinkled on the ground or in fat. Move feeding places from time to time to guard against predators, disease and unwelcome visitors such as rats.

## Meadow magic

A meadow makes a wonderful alternative to plain grass and brings vibrant colour to your lawn. It can be difficult to make a meadow from scratch but you can easily plant meadow flowers as plugs into your grass. Generally cowslip, ox-eye daisy, meadow cranesbill, yellow rattle, self-heal and meadow buttercup do well. Remember not to mow over them!

**Remember that water is vitally important, so if you have a bird bath or pond keep it topped up and ensure it's ice-free.**

## Compost bins

Make your own natural fertiliser. Compost garden waste and vegetable kitchen scraps.

## Pile of logs

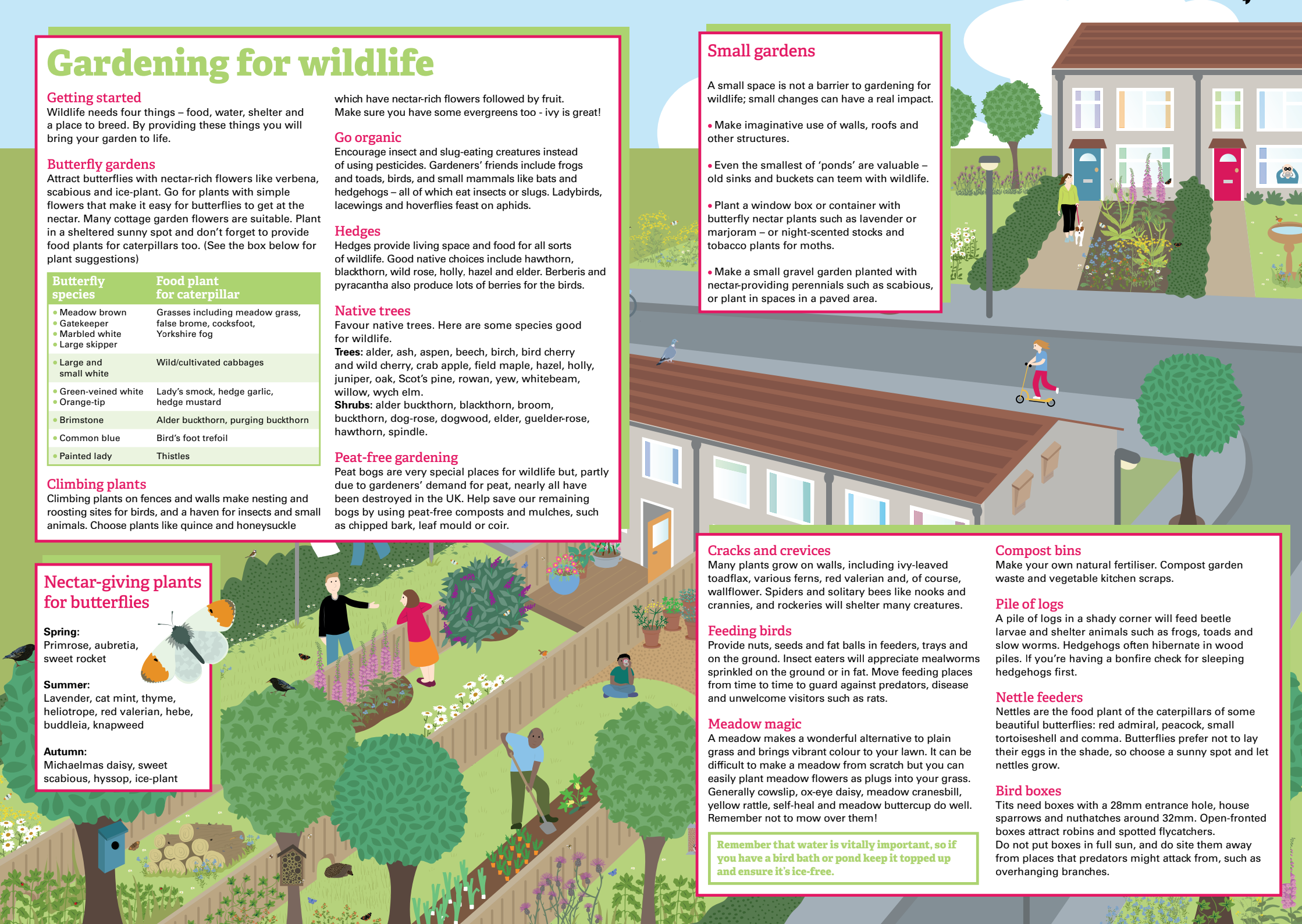
A pile of logs in a shady corner will feed beetle larvae and shelter animals such as frogs, toads and slow worms. Hedgehogs often hibernate in wood piles. If you're having a bonfire check for sleeping hedgehogs first.

## Nettle feeders

Nettles are the food plant of the caterpillars of some beautiful butterflies: red admiral, peacock, small tortoiseshell and comma. Butterflies prefer not to lay their eggs in the shade, so choose a sunny spot and let nettles grow.

## Bird boxes

Tits need boxes with a 28mm entrance hole, house sparrows and nuthatches around 32mm. Open-fronted boxes attract robins and spotted flycatchers. Do not put boxes in full sun, and do site them away from places that predators might attack from, such as overhanging branches.





# Every garden provides a vital link for wildlife



Up to a quarter of a city's area can be made up of gardens. Although each garden on its own may be small, together they form a patchwork linking urban green spaces with nature reserves and the wider countryside.

With an estimated 24 million gardens in the UK, the way they are managed

can make a big difference for wildlife. Hedgehogs, sparrows, song thrushes and stag beetles are all declining species in the UK. If we manage our gardens for wildlife, these creatures and many more will feel the benefits.

So give it a go and watch as wildlife brings colour, movement and beauty to your garden.

Visit [www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening) for more ideas.

## Join The Wildlife Trusts

You can make a real difference to our work to protect wildlife by becoming a member of your local Wildlife Trust.

Your money will help look after the wildlife and wild places in your area, and support your Trust in their work to inspire people about nature, including working with local schools and communities.

To find out more about membership please visit: [www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk](http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk) or call us on **01889 880100**

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## Wild About Gardens

Wildlife gardening information and advice from The Wildlife Trusts' partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society can be found at: [www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

## Vine House Farm Bird Foods

The Wildlife Trusts are proud to work in partnership with Vine House Farm Bird Foods. As much seed as possible is grown on their conservation award-winning farm in Lincolnshire. By using Vine House Farm Bird Food you are supporting your local Wildlife Trust. [www.vinehousefarm.co.uk](http://www.vinehousefarm.co.uk)