

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

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.



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



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.



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

REMEMBER THAT DEEP PONDS CAN BE A HAZARD TO CHILDREN

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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.



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



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

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

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.

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

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

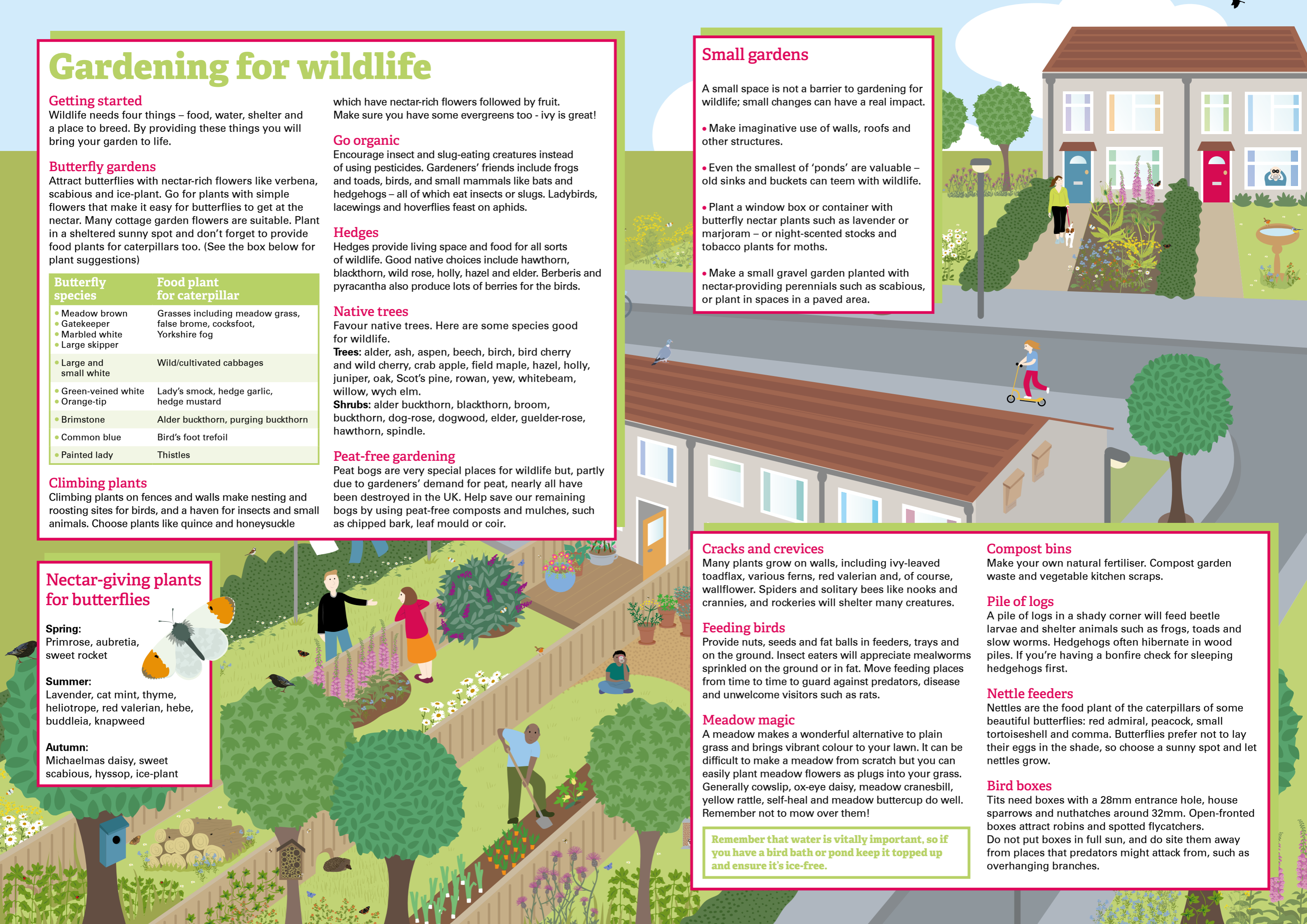
A pile of logs in a shady corner will feed beetle larvae and shelter animals such as frogs, toads and slow worms. Hedgehogs often hibernate in wood piles. If you're having a bonfire check for sleeping hedgehogs first.

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.

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.wildlifetrusts.org** or call us on **01636 677711**.

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Visit www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening for more ideas.

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**

Vine House Farm Bird Foods

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