

BBC
breathing
places



get
wild 
about your
garden

pocket guide

BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

Go wild with Breathing Places at bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

“For me a garden without wildlife is a garden without a soul.”

Chris Beardshaw

BBC's Wild About Your Garden presenter



Making your garden grow wild

Whether you are an expert with a large garden or an amateur who enjoys growing plants in a pot, whether you have a window box or an allotment, you can be a wildlife gardener and do your bit to encourage wildlife into your patch.

There are around 15 million gardens in the UK, all of which could provide valuable havens for wildlife. In fact, with a large number of creatures, like the common frog, the song thrush, the hedgehog and smooth newt in decline, your garden could become a vital refuge with just a few simple changes.

Attracting wildlife into your garden couldn't be easier. It's also exciting and great fun. Just follow our top tips and you will soon be discovering a whole new world right on your doorstep.

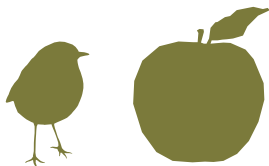


Top tips

Brighten up your garden – Use flowers that provide pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and other insects all year round. Try aubrieta and flowering currant in the spring; buddleia, lavender and thyme in the summer; and sedum, Michaelmas daisy and hebe in the autumn.

Encourage variety – Try a mixture of trees, shrubs and climbers, or a mixed hedge, to give food and shelter to wildlife. Good small trees for blossom and berries include rowan, crab apple and hawthorn.

Old is awesome – Nurture mature trees in and around your garden and they'll look after the wildlife. Old trees are more important for wildlife than any other single factor – if your garden's too small for big trees, try to get some planted in the neighbourhood and protect any that are already there.



Create a bird buffet – Provide food and water for birds all year round. Offer a mix of food including peanuts, seeds, kitchen scraps and fat balls, plus natural food such as berries and seed-heads.

Don't be too tidy – Piles of leaves and twigs at the bottom of a hedge will shelter frogs, mice and hedgehogs, while the seeds in dead flower heads provide valuable bird food. Encourage wildflowers to grow by leaving a patch of grass unmown. Your enriched lawn will provide shelter for small mammals and food for caterpillars.

Garden in a sustainable way – Avoid chemicals and don't use peat to enrich your soil – demand for peat threatens the survival of important natural landscapes. Collect water in butts and check the origin of wood used for your garden – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label indicates wood from sustainable forests.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: **bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces**

Create mini-habitats

The wetlands – your pond!

Creating a pond is one of the best things you can do to encourage wildlife. Make sure it has at least one sloping side to allow creatures an easy way out, and add lots of plants. To encourage the greatest diversity of frogs, newts, toads and aquatic insects, avoid stocking your pond with fish as they will eat most other species.

The grassland – your lawn!

An area of short-cut grass offers little for wildlife and takes a lot of time and energy to look after so reduce the size of your lawn, sow it with wildflowers and allow part of it to grow longer. A flower-rich patch of longer grass will attract bees, butterflies, grasshoppers and crickets as well as the birds that feed on them! Long grass also provides good cover for frogs and newts.

The rock face – your garage wall!

A brick wall may not offer much to wildlife, but covered with climbing plants it can be home for nesting birds and hibernating butterflies and moths. Use a trellis to encourage honeysuckle and ivy – a vital species which provides nectar and berries late in the year.

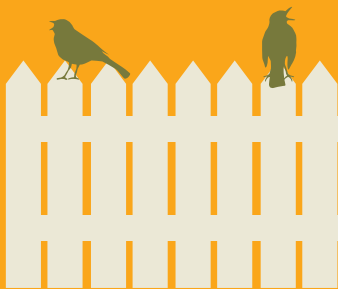
The forest – your hedge!

Thousands of miles of hedges were removed from the countryside in the second half of the twentieth century. By encouraging a few metres of mixed hedge in your garden, you can help re-establish this vital wildlife habitat. A well-established hedge can provide a home for mammals such as voles, mice, and hedgehogs, and for birds such as song thrushes, finches, blackbirds and wrens. Hedges also enable the growth of wildflowers like foxgloves, primroses, sweet violets and red campion.



Garden

bingo



Go on safari in your garden and see what you can find!



Chaffinch – A colourful finch that loves a mixture of habitats and food. This flexibility has made it one of the UK's most successful garden species.



Cardinal beetle – Spectacular, bright red beetle with comb-like antennae. Seen all over the country from May to July. Look out for them on tree bark.



Seen



Seen



Grey squirrel – Common across the country, and likely to be seen raiding your bird table – a good reason to build a special feeding station for birds.



Ivy – One of the most important plants for wildlife in any garden. Ivy offers great shelter and a vital end-of-season fuel stop.

Seen

Seen



Natterjack toad – Very rare, but you might be lucky if you live near the coast. Has a rough, warty skin with a prominent yellow stripe down its back.



Peacock butterfly – Look out for these fabulous butterflies feeding on buddleia in midsummer.

Seen

Bingo

Do One Thing

Here are some other ideas to transform your garden into a wildlife paradise.

Bee friendly

Flowers like clover, foxgloves and snapdragons attract bumblebees. Hogweed and brambles are good for mason bees. And a box filled with hollow pipes, such as cut lengths of bamboo, provides a good home for red mason bees.

Make a wood pile

Gather some old wood – branches, logs, anything natural – and pile it up in a quiet corner of your garden. If you can get them, big logs provide a great home for beetles and all sorts of other exciting mini-beasts.

Pet top tips

Try brushing your dog outside – the fur provides an excellent nest liner for birds. If you have a cat, fit a collar with a bell. This will provide a warning to all the wildlife visiting your garden.

Wildlife-friendly pest control

Swap poisonous chemicals for natural predators like centipedes, ground beetles, hoverflies and ladybirds. Flowers like angelica and poached egg plants attract hoverflies. Rock and wood piles are good for centipedes and beetles. And marigolds produce a scent that deters blackfly and greenfly.

Bonfire checklist

While bonfires are being stacked, wildlife are attracted to them as great homes, so always check yours before lighting it. Try lifting up the base with a broom handle to inspect underneath (a torch also helps). It's a quick job but could save anything from a hibernating hedgehog to a nesting wren.

Get an allotment

Allotments are great spaces for wildlife to feed and live in. They'll also get you outside, keeping fit and eating well. And they're a perfect alternative if you haven't got your own garden. Contact your local council or The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) for more information.

do
one
thing

For more ideas of what you can
do for nature, why not check out
other Do One Thing activities at:

bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

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