

Attracting wildlife to your garden

It is surprising how many creatures you can attract into your garden, just by planting suitable plants, giving you a fascinating range of creatures to watch. You will also be giving the creatures food and somewhere to live. Many of their natural **habitats** have been destroyed by buildings, industry and pollution.

So what can you do to create a garden that attracts wildlife?

The First Steps

1. Stop using garden chemicals

Insecticides will kill the pests they are supposed to kill, but can also harm other creatures. For example slug pellets will kill slugs but can also harm hedgehogs and black beetles, both of which eat slugs.

Herbicides can harm worms and other creatures that live in the soil.

2. Native Plants

Native plants are the ones the insects and other creatures usually feed on so they attract more wildlife. Native wild flowers are attractive and can easily be grown in a flower border. Native trees and shrubs can be used as an attractive hedge.



Different habitats

If you want the creatures to live in your garden then you need to provide them with **habitats**.

3. The 'woodland edge'

The edge of a wood is a great habitat for many creatures because it has many layers of plants. If you have no room for a tree then a hedge or climbing plants over a trellis can be used to create a high level. Shrubs should be grown below this and at ground level woodland wild flowers. It is also important to have dead and **decaying** material on the soil surface. This will provide hiding places for creatures. Forest bark or leafmould can be used for this.



4. Lawns and wildflower 'meadows'

If you leave areas of lawn uncut for a few months wildflowers and grasses will have the chance to grow. These will provide a new habitat for insects and small mammals.

For a 'spring meadow', leave the grass uncut until the end of June. Then cut it down. After cutting leave the grass to give the seeds time to fall before raking. Rake off the **hay**. For the rest of the year mow as normal. For a 'late summer meadow' keep the grass roughly cut in early summer, then leave it until late September when it should be cut and raked.

Removing the dead material is needed to reduce soil **fertility**, which encourages wildflowers. See HDRA factsheet—Creating a wildflower meadow.

5. Ponds

A pond will quickly attract a huge range of creatures such as beetles, pondskaters, damselflies, frogs and toads. The pond will also provide a place for birds to bathe and drink.

A pond should be in an open sunny space and the larger it is the better. However, even a small pond will attract plenty of wildlife. A wildlife pond must have some shallow edges to allow creatures to climb in and out and in one place a minimum depth of 60cm. It should also have plants around it on at least one side.

See the HDRA factsheet—Creating a pond

6. Old walls and log piles

Many wildflowers grow well in gaps in rocks and old walls. The gaps between the rocks are ideal homes for many insects and small animals. A pile of logs is also a good place for insects and small animals to hide.

Other ideas

Food

Flowers will attract butterflies, bees, hoverflies and other nectar and pollen feeding creatures.

Once these are in your garden the birds and small animals that feed on them will follow. See the plant list opposite for ideas of plants to use which are attractants. Berries on shrubs are another source of food.

8. Bird-table

Food for birds in the winter months can be a life saver. A bird table gives birds a safe place to feed. It should be on an open site so that cats can not hide, and catch the birds.

9. Shelter

Many birds, bats and hedgehogs will use man-made boxes as a home if there is no natural home for them. These boxes can be bought or made.

10. The compost heap

A compost heap is an ideal hiding place for many creatures. Worms, beetles and other insects that help the waste to rot can be found there, as well as larger creatures such as toads.

Glossary

Decaying	- rotting.
Fertility	- the amount of nutrients in the soil.
Habitat	- a place where a creature lives.
Hay	- cut grass
Herbicide	- chemicals that kill weeds.
Insecticide	- chemicals that kill creatures.
Native	- plants that have grown in the area for hundreds of years.

Wildflowers for a the flower border

Field poppy—*Papaver rhoeas*
 Field scabious—*Knautia arvensis*
 Meadow cranesbill—*Geranium pratense*
 Cornflower—*Centaurea cyanus*
 Ox-eye daisy—*Leucanthemum vulgare*

Plants for a native hedge

Beech—*Fagus sylvatica*
 Field maple—*Acer campestre*
 Hawthorn—*Crataegus monogyna*
 Geulder rose—*Viburnum opulus*
 Hazel—*Corylus avellana*

Wildflowers for dappled shade

Snowdrop—*Galanthus nivalis*
 Wood anemone—*Anemone nemorosa*
 Bluebell—*Endymion nonscriptus*
 Primrose—*Primula vulgaris*
 Selfheal—*Prunella vulgaris*

Native shrubs

Alder buckthorn—*Frangula alnus*
 Wayfaring tree—*Viburnum lantana*
 Goat willow—*Salix caprea*
 Dogwood—*Cornus sanguinea*

Wildflowers for in the water at the edge

Marsh marigold—*Caltha palustris*
 Yellow flag—*Iris pseudacorus*
 Water mint—*Mentha aquatica*
 Water forget-me-not—*Myosotis scorpioides*

Attracting wildlife



A student's guide to attracting wildlife into the garden



Garden Organic for Schools

Attracting wildlife to your garden

It is surprising how many creatures you can attract into your garden just by having a good range of suitable plants. Provide creatures with the food and shelter they need and students will be able to observe a fascinating range of creatures. Many of their natural habitats have been destroyed by buildings, industry and pollution.

The greater the variety of plants, features and habitats provided the greater variety of creatures will be attracted to your nature area.

The First Steps

1. Stop using chemicals

Insecticides will not only kill the pests they are supposed to kill, but they can also harm other creatures. For example slug pellets can also poison hedgehogs and black beetles, both of which eat slugs.

Fungicides and herbicides can harm worms and other soil-dwelling creatures.

Many pesticides persist in the environment long after they have been applied, affecting a wide range of creatures and soil life.



2. Native Plants

Native plants usually support far more life than exotic plants. This is because native plants are those which the insects and other creatures have evolved with and make best use of. Always make sure that plants will benefit the creatures who live in your garden. The plant list on this leaflet will give you some ideas to get started.

Wild flowers are attractive and can easily be grown in a flower border. Native trees and shrubs can be used to make a hedge.



Different habitats

If you want creatures to live in your garden then you need to provide them with the habitats they require.

3. The 'woodland edge'

The edge of a wood is one of the richest wildlife habitats because it is made up of several layers. Where trees and shrubs end and the sunlight breaks through, you can find more species of plants and animals than anywhere else in a wood.



A woodland edge can be easily recreated. If you have no room for a tree then a hedge or climbing plants over a trellis will be enough to create a high level. Shrubs should be grown below this and at ground level woodland wild flowers. It is also important to have dead and decaying material on the soil surface to provide hiding places for creatures. Forest bark or leafmould can fulfil this function.

4. Lawns and wildflower 'meadows'

Leaving areas of lawn uncut for a few months will give many native wildflowers and grasses a chance to bloom. These will provide a new 'habitat' for insects and small mammals. Even small areas of wildflowers will attract butterflies, moths and provide a feeding area for birds, bats and hedgehogs.

For a 'spring meadow', leave the grass uncut until the end of June. Then cut it with shears or a strimmer. After cutting allow time for seeds to fall before raking off. Rake off the hay, and for the rest of the year mow as normal.

For a 'late summer meadow' keep the grass roughly cut in early summer, then leave it until late September when it should be cut and raked. Removing dead material is essential because it reduces the fertility of the ground which encourages wildflowers.

See HDRA factsheet—Creating a wildflower meadow

5. Ponds

A pond will very quickly attract a huge range of creatures. Beetles, pondskaters, damselflies, frogs and toads will all be attracted to a pond. The pond will also provide a place for birds to bathe and drink.

A pond should be in an open sunny space and the larger it is the better. However, even a small pond will attract plenty of wildlife. A wildlife pond must have some shallow edges to allow creatures to climb in and out and a minimum depth in one place of 60cm.

See the HDRA factsheet—Creating a pond

6. Old walls and log piles

Many wildflowers grow well over rocks and old walls. The gaps between the rocks form ideal homes for many insects and small animals. A pile of logs is also a good place for insects and small animals to hide.

Other ideas

Attractant plants

Flowers such as buddleja and poached egg plant will attract butterflies, bees, hoverflies and other nectar and pollen feeding creatures. Once these are in your garden, the birds and small animals that feed on them will follow. See the plant list on this leaflet for ideas.

Bird-table

A regular supply of food for birds in the winter months can be a life saver. A bird table provides a safe place for birds to feed. It should be in an open site so that cats cannot hide, and catch birds unawares.

Shelter

Many birds, bats and hedgehogs will adopt man-made structures as a home if there is no suitable alternative cover. These boxes can be bought or made.

The compost heap

This will provide an ideal hiding place for many creatures. Worms, beetles and other insects that help the decaying process can be found there, as well as larger creatures such as toads.

Further Reading

- Organic Grounds Maintenance Manual - HDRA
- Growing Naturally, A Teachers Guide to Organic Gardening - M.Brown ,Southgate
- How to make a wildlife garden - C.Baines, Elm Tree Books
- Muck and Magic - J.Readman, HDRA/ Search Press
- The Small Ecological Garden - S. Stickland

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