

# Wildlife Gardening in Action

## CASE STUDY: Grow with Case, Kingston upon Hull

### Describe your garden/outdoor space before you started gardening with wildlife in mind:

Case Training Service is a small charity based in Hull for adults with a learning disability. The charity was founded in 1985 and offers its client a range of day care activities in a supported friendly environment.

Grow with Case was set up by the charity in 2010 in response to the ever changing need of its clients, and was lucky enough to acquire two allotment plots just over two miles away from its main building. It took a few years of hard work from the Grow clients and staff to create a productive, diverse space which catered for the needs of Case's clients. Funding from a variety of sources allowed Grow to purchase a polytunnel, greenhouse and materials to create two raised beds, a tool shed and a small pergola seating area surrounded by fruit trees, perennials, shrubs and a ridged plastic pond.

In 2017 and 2020 Grow took on a further two very overgrown plots, which were covered in a variety of rubbish from rotten pieces of wood, glass, plastic and general waste, but on the plus side there were some nicely established plum trees, a pear tree and a sturdy shed. Taking over and redeveloping these two new plots did sadly mean that certain areas on the original plots became slightly neglected; the diversity of plants declined and the plastic pond became choked up with flag irises.



### How did you get started on your wildlife gardening journey?

Although our four plots are divided by a gravel roadway – two plots either side – with the support of Case Training Services, its Trustees, sponsorship and lots of creative input from the Grow staff and clients we have been able to develop the plots as if they were one large plot. We have designated managed spaces where we can grow vegetables, cut flowers and fruit, which is what allotments are generally meant for, but with a third of the area set aside for wildlife. We built a new tea cabin from old pallets with solar panels fitted where the clients can have a break, relax and retreat to on a rainy day. We have also installed a composting toilet which, although very basic, allows us to be based on the allotment all year round.



### What actions have you taken for wildlife in your garden/outdoor space and why?

Over the last year we have started to focus on developing our non-cultivated areas into a more wildlife friendly environment, with diverse planting and the creation of different habitats. We have made and erected bird boxes for a range of birds, as well as butterfly boxes, hedgehog houses and bug hotels. On each double plot we also have a large bug hotel, made from a variety of materials such as brick, wood and roof tiles, all found on and around our plots.

This winter, we have removed the old ridged plastic pond and put in a larger, more natural pond which is planted with oxygenating plants as well as a variety of marginal pond plants and a small water lily. The space where the old pond was is now a hibernaculum at the side of our new pond. This will hopefully encourage the newts, frogs and toads to overwinter on our plot. We also have bird feeders which we keep topped up all year round.

### What resources or support have you used?

We have tried to use recycled wood for our building projects, some from old pallets and some pieces donated by friends of the charity. We do get a small budget from the charity, but this covers all our costs, from seeds and compost to craft materials for the trainees.

We have a very generous community on the allotment site who often donate items to us that they think we might be able to use and upcycle, one of which was a wrought iron window cover that we turned into a gate. We have also had some very generous sponsorship over the last few years, as well as holding a Grow open day every year where we sell produce to raise funds for our gardening projects.



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### What differences have you noticed as a result of your actions?

There has been a definite increase in birds, with more variety of species including long-tailed tits, great tits, finches and wrens, along with the crows, sparrows, magpies and pigeons. No sign of any starlings wanting to move into our starling nest box though! There is evidence of a local fox population although they're not often seen, however the rabbit population seems to have decreased! We are more mindful of the insect population and, although we discourage some as we don't want them eating our crops, we do love to see ladybirds, shield bugs, frogs, toads and newts.

### How did it make you feel?

For adults with a learning disability it's often difficult for them to express and explain their feelings, but they do say that being on the allotment is a relaxing place to be. The world can often be a noisy overcrowded place where our clients feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable; the allotments offer them a safe, therapeutic space away from that busyness and gives them a unique sensory experience that makes them feel happy. It's a wonderful boost to their self-esteem, especially when they see seeds they have sown sprout and grow into a flourishing plant. It gives them a sense of accomplishment and purpose, especially when they might face other challenges in life.



### What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife in your garden/outdoor space?

We have had many favourite moments watching wildlife on the allotments, from seeing a cheeky squirrel eating from our bird feeders, spotting frog spawn in our pond for the first time in years, taking part in the Big Butterfly Count and seeing the diversity of species we have on our allotment site, as well as watching a blue tit move into one of our bird boxes and raise a family.

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### Has receiving a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Wildlife Gardening Award made you consider doing more for wildlife in your garden? If so, what will you do next?

In a simple word, yes. Filling in the application form highlighted some areas of the allotments that could be improved upon to attract more wildlife to our plots. So we added a hibernaculum to our pond area, increased the areas where we leave long grass and are slowly increasing the diversity of plants that we grow in our wildlife area in order to attract a variety of insects. This year we will be doing companion planting amongst our vegetables to deter pests. We have also been experimenting with wildlife friendly slug and snail repellent such as eggshells, wool pellets and copper bands around some of our plant pots.

### Contact us or find out more:

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