



#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Food.

This resource contains lots of helpful information on how to ensure there is enough food in your outdoor space to support a variety of wildlife throughout the year.

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1. Wildflowers

Even the smallest of yards can accommodate areas of perennial wildflowers which regrow each year and provide a banquet of pollen and nectar for bees and butterflies, as well as providing an ideal habitat for many insects to lay their eggs and food for caterpillars. Sowing wildflowers in pots can be a great way to add colour and natural beauty to your outdoor space. Most wildflowers will grow happily in pots and if you choose perennial varieties, they will come back year after year with relatively little maintenance. They look great outside the front of your house too, even if space is limited.

For more information about how to grow wildflowers in pots see our toolkit: **Wildlife Actions: Yards and Small Gardens.**

Wildflowers thrive in low nutrient soil so do well in **areas of gravel and grow in cracks between paving slabs and bricks.** If you have an outdoor grey space with some dusty soil or gravel just scatter some seeds and see what comes through. Or you could **lift a paving slab, break up the surface of the soil with a trowel or gardening fork, and scatter some seeds** there to create a mini-wildflower patch.

It's useful to consider your space and how tall you'd like your wildflowers to grow. If you'd prefer lower growing plants, select species that flower on shorter stems.

If you desire to create a more **instant impact**, you can **buy plug plants or perennial wildflowers** from a garden centre that are ready to flower – be sure to seek out garden centres and nurseries that sell plants in peat free compost.

Making it easier: If you find lifting and bending difficult, you can reduce the strain by planting in smaller pots which are easier to lift, place pots on raised surfaces like tables or benches and use raised beds for planting. Small 15L bags of peat-free compost are easier to handle.



Seed and plug plant supplier info:

- Emorsgate supply a large range of seed mixes:
<https://wildseed.co.uk/page/management-of-meadows-and-grassland>
- Cumbria Wildflowers sell a range of seed mixes and plug plants:
<https://www.cumbriawildflowers.co.uk/>
- Boston Seeds is another recommended supplier of seed mixes, plugs and bulbs:
<https://www.bostonseeds.com/>

Peat free plant supplier info:

- Mires Beck nursery at North Cave is an excellent nursery supplying plug plants of local provenance <https://www.miresbeck.co.uk/>
- Notcutts Garden Centre in Pontefract sells native perennial wildflowers in peat free compost <https://www.notcutts.co.uk/plants>
- The Little Green Plant Factory - Online sales of alpines, bulbs, climbers, herbs and veg, grasses, herbaceous perennials, roses, shrubs and trees
<https://thelittlegreenplantfactory.co.uk/>
- Brunswick Organic Nursery in Bishopthorpe, York sell a wide range of plants in peat-free compost <https://www.brunswickyork.org.uk/>
- B&Q also now sells a range of plants in peat free compost – and details of peat content are displayed on all plant labels

Leave your weeds:

So much of our native wildlife relies on native plants. Plants considered to be ‘weeds’ are valuable food for caterpillars, birds, and pollinators. Before reaching for your trowel, it’s worth doing some research about the wildlife these plants support - this may make you find a space for them in your garden. You can transform your relationship with these plants overnight and start valuing their contribution to your yard!

Planting for butterflies:

Butterflies are declining faster in urban areas compared to rural regions and this is largely due to lack of suitable habitat and food sources. Although most wildflowers with pollen will support butterflies, caterpillars often need specific ‘host’ plants to support their development. Growing host plants in your outside space isn’t a guaranteed way to attract specific species of caterpillar, but they will at least offer an extra source of food for pollinating insects.



Species	Host plant
Comma	Stinging nettle, hop, currants
Common blue	Bird’s-foot-trefoil
Dingy skipper	Bird’s-foot-trefoil, horseshoe vetch
Green-veined white	Hedge mustard, cuckoo flower, nasturtium
Holly blue	Holly, ivy



Large skipper	Cock's-foot, false brome
Large white	Cabbage, Brussels-sprout, nasturtium, wild mignonette
Meadow brown	Fescues, meadow-grasses and bents
Orange-tip	Cuckooflower, garlic mustard, honesty
Painted lady	Thistles, stinging nettle
Peacock	Stinging nettle
Red admiral	Stinging nettle, hop
Ringlet	Cock's-foot, false brome, tufted hair grass, common couch
Small copper	Common sorrel, sheep's sorrel
Small skipper	Yorkshire-fog
Small tortoiseshell	Stinging nettle, small nettle
Small white	Cabbage, nasturtium, wild mignonette, garlic mustard
Wall brown	Cock's-foot, false brome, Yorkshire fog, wavy-hair grass
Speckled Wood	False Brome, Cock's-foot, Yorkshire-fog, Common Couch

Mini-wildflower meadows:

Wildflowers are a vital food source for many different types of pollinating insects including bees, butterflies, and moths. Fortunately, you don't need huge tracks of land to create your own wildflower meadow, in fact you could create your own in a plant pot or window box.

Option 1 - sit back and let the grass grow.

Long grass is one of the rarest garden habitats, yet it's incredibly beneficial for wildlife. If you have a lawn, consider leaving a section of it to grow long – you might be surprised by the variety of wildflowers that appear.

Option 2 - start from scratch.

Depending on the condition of your outside space, you may want to consider starting you own wildflower meadow from scratch.

Before you begin you should check the pH of your soil, your soil type and the amount of sun that the area receives, this will help you to decide what kind of seeds to sow. Armed with this information, wildflower merchants will be able to provide you with suitable seed mixes. Remember, you do not need nutrient rich soil, subsoil and rubble are perfectly adequate for wildflowers!



Image credit: Andy Steele

For more information about how to to transform your lawn or community space and encourage wildflowers see our [#TeamWilder Toolkit: Meadow Creation and Maintenance](#).



To create your patch from scratch:

- **Start by digging or rotavating your wildflower patch.** Bury any existing vegetation to a depth of 20cm. This will also help to bring less fertile soil to the surface – which is ideal for wildflowers.
- **You can lift off a whole section of turf and use this elsewhere, the bare soil below is perfect for wildflowers and wild grasses.** An old gravel area is also a good place to transform.
- **Rake the surface of your meadow to create a seedbed.**
- **Don't add manure or fertiliser to your wildflower bed,** this will encourage grasses and other plants to grow, which could outcompete your wildflowers.
- **Sow your seeds by hand in autumn, this will give them time to settle over winter.** If your soil is a heavy clay, you should consider waiting until spring to sow.
- **Scatter your seeds evenly by sowing half of them lengthways and the other half widthways across the plot.** Consider mixing your seeds with sand, this will help you to see any gaps.
- **Once your seeds have been sown, lightly rake them in to the soil and water them thoroughly.**
- If tough grasses are going to be problem, then **add some yellow rattle seed** to your meadow mix as it helps keep fast growing grasses at bay.

Maintaining your meadow:

After mowing, always leave the clippings for a couple of days to drop any seed, then rake up and remove to keep soil fertility down.

During the first year, it is essential to get the mowing regime right. Cut to 5-7 cm whenever the height reaches 10-20 cm.

Control weeds like thistles, nettles, and docks by hand-weeding. It takes a while for a meadow to establish, so be patient in year one, and quite patient in year two as well! Know that all your hard work will eventually pay off.

After the year one, you can reduce to two or three cuts a year. When you mow and how often you mow depends on what flowers you want to encourage and whether the grasses are outcompeting your flowers – this may require you to cut and rake more. Follow this link for detailed information about meadow care: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/lawns/wildflower-meadow-maintenance>

Suggested plants:

Plant	Description	When to sow
Red campion	The bright rose-red flowers of red campion brighten up roadsides, woodlands and hedges throughout the summer	Spring/Summer
Primrose	A hardy, white spring plant that favours woodland clearings, hedgerows and grassland habitats.	Spring



Cowslip	The cowslip brightens up ancient meadows and woodlands with its egg-yolk-yellow, nodding blooms.	Spring
Ribwort plantain	The brown, oval flower heads of ribwort plantain balance on top of thin, wiry stems; seed heads provide food for birds in winter.	Spring/Summer
Selfheal	A low growing perennial herb with paired, oval leaves and purple or violet flowers.	Spring
Wild daffodil	The yellow trumpets of daffodils brighten up the dullest spring day as they cluster together in gardens, on roadsides and in parks during March and April.	Spring
Bluebell	The bluebell spends most of the year as bulb underground only emerging to flower and leaf from April onwards.	Spring
Meadow buttercup	Meadow buttercup is a tall and stately buttercup, with buttery-yellow flowers.	Spring
Ox-eye daisy	The oxeye daisy is easy to identify by its large, round flower heads that appear on single, tall stems.	Spring/summer
Musk mallow	An elegant relative of Common mallow, musk mallow has delicate pale pink flowers that appear in July and August.	Summer
Toadflax	Common has yellow-and-orange flowers that appear in June. They look like the flowers of snapdragons (familiar garden plants).	Summer
Bird's-foot-trefoil	Common bird's-foot-trefoil is a member of the pea family. Its yellow flowers look like little slippers and appear in small clusters.	Summer
Tufted vetch	Tufted vetch has long, grey-green leaves that grow in a symmetrical row from long, trailing stems.	Summer
Bladder campion	Bladder campion has large, balloon-shaped swellings behind its white, five-petaled flowers. It is a medium-tall plant that is usually hairless and greyish.	Summer
White campion	White campion has large, balloon-shaped swellings behind its white, five-petaled flowers.	Summer
Wild carrot	The white umbels of Wild carrot are very densely packed and rounded. Its leaves are divided into narrow leaflets, and the plant is hairy.	Summer
Greater knapweed	The large, bright pink-purple 'flowers' of Greater Knapweed are actually composite flower heads made up of many small 'florets' (tiny flowers).	Summer

2. Flowers for all seasons

Wild pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths (2200 species), flies (6700 species) and various other insects such as beetles, wasps & thrips. Two-thirds of our moths and 71% of our butterflies are in long term decline along with half our 27 bumblebee



species. **It's so important to provide food for these creatures that are struggling – you can do this by choosing plants that provide a strong mix that will offer pollen & nectar through the seasons.**

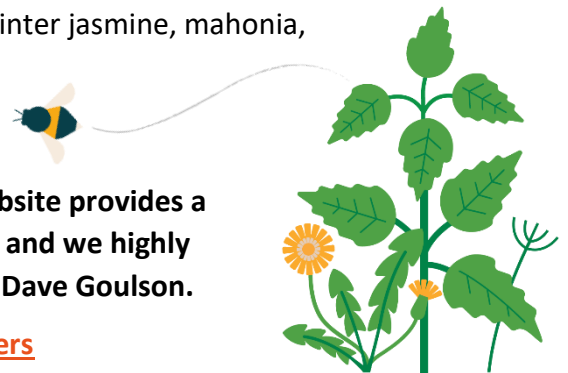
Look out for the months when you are lacking food for pollinators. Then whenever you buy, sow, or receive a new plant, try and plug these gaps. Planting in pots is a great way to add colour and variety to a small space. Here are some species to get you started:

- **Early Spring flowers:** winter aconite, primrose, crocus, cowslip, lesser celandine, cyclamen, ground ivy, daisy, saxifrage, red campion, wallflowers, dead nettle, cherry plum
- **Summer flowers:** scabious, verbena, toadflax, oxeye daisies, mallow, alliums, borage, honesty, foxglove, yarrow, knapweed, vipers' bugloss, teasel, forget-me-not, meadow cranesbill, aquilegia
- **Late Autumn flowers:** ivy, buddleia, sedum, self-heal, wild carrot, devil's bit scabious, Michaelmas daisies, cyclamen, St. John's wort, asters, purple loosestrife, fuchsia
- **Winter flowers:** snowdrops, hellebores, winter heather, winter jasmine, mahonia, winter honeysuckle

Planting for bees:

If you are particularly interested in planting for bees, this website provides a wealth of information about the best garden plants for bees, and we highly recommend buying the book 'Gardening for Bumblebees' by Dave Goulson.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lifesci/goulsonlab/resources/flowers>



Bare soil: If you've got areas of bare soil this is an opportunity to plan creeping perennials which can provide an additional source of food for pollinators whilst reducing the need for weeding. For sunny spots creeping jenny, creeping thyme, bugle, wild strawberries will do well, or for a shadier spot try forget-me-not, vinca minor, herb Robert and creeping comfrey.

3. Night scented flowers

Lots of people have a butterfly garden, but have you considered having a moth garden?

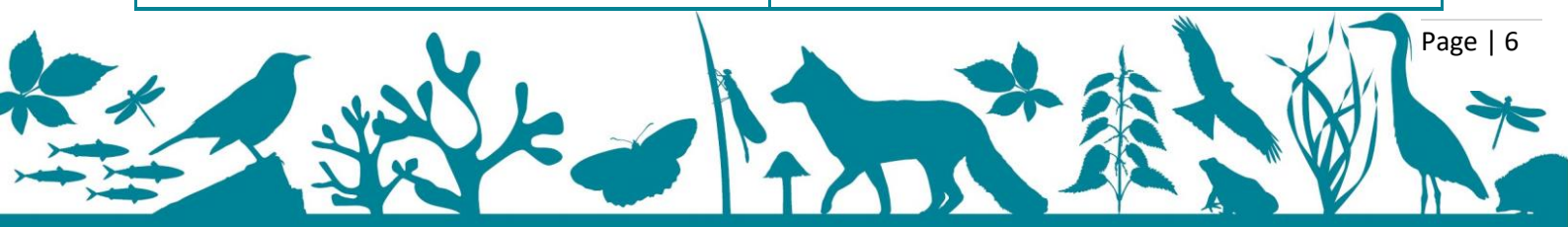
With over 2500 species of moths living in the UK you could be attracting a lot of new visitors to your garden! A startling 2021 study revealed that the overall number of larger moths in Britain has declined by 33% and 50 species of larger moths have become extinct this century.

Attracting moths will also mean that you are providing **food for night-time visitors**, bats, web building spiders, owls and small mammals will all eat night moths. If garden birds find them in the day asleep then they are also an easy meal!

Moth caterpillars are easier to catch than moths and our common garden birds will have more success raising a family if you have a plentiful supply of caterpillars.

Planting for moths:

Night time scent	Moth caterpillar plants
Argentinian vervain (<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>)	Common hawthorn
Globe artichoke (<i>Cynara scolymus</i>)	Currants



Dame's-violet (<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>)	English oak
Miss Willmott's ghost (<i>Eryngium giganteum</i>)	Hazel
Cherry pie (<i>Heliotropium arborescens</i>)	Holly
Evening primrose (<i>Oenothera biennis</i>)	Hop
Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)	Ivy
Night-scented catchfly (<i>Silene noctiflora</i>)	Stinging nettle
Night-scented stock (<i>Matthiola bicornis</i>)	White willow
Nottingham catchfly (<i>Silene nutans</i>)	Bedstraws
Soapwort (<i>Saponaria officinalis</i>)	Cleavers
Sweet rocket (<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>)	Clematis
Tobacco plant (<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>)	Dog rose
White jasmine (<i>Jasminum officinale</i>)	Mint

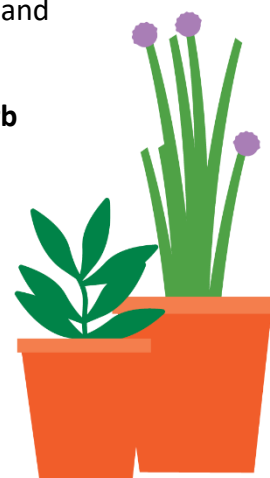
Top tips!

- Set up a moth trap at night to check what visitors you have, adapt your planting, and try again to see if your interventions are working.
- Choose pale blue and white flowers to reflect the light at night so night flying insects can see them easily.
- Hedges are fantastic habitats for moths (the loss of hedgerows has probably hugely impacted on their decline – another reason to plant that hedge!)
- Don't worry about the damage that moth caterpillars will cause plants as they will not be present in large numbers.
- Many plants considered to be weeds are valuable for day and night moth caterpillars, so when you are weeding or thinking about your wild corner remember to keep in plants such as thistles, nettles, rose-bay willow herb, ragwort, and valerian.

4. Herbs

Herbs are plants that just keep giving: global travellers, often drought resistant, great for containers, scented, medicinal, transforming food, a long history of folklore tales and when flowering they attract and feed huge numbers of pollinators.

If you have a small garden or little yard and can only grow one thing, then a herb planter is for you. You can intersperse herbs with flowers and bulbs for a vibrant container. Herbs being so versatile will also happily occupy a bed, although many prefer good drainage. Just be careful when you plant them in the garden, as some can become very large in the right conditions (e.g., rosemary and sage), some will spread as far as they can (e.g. mint and lemon balm) and some will self-seed far and wide (marjoram and fennel). To prevent herbs from becoming too large and spreading you can grow them in pots on a patio or plant in a pot or bucket (add drainage holes) and sink it into the ground if you wish to grow them in your garden.



Here are some herbs that are wonderful for pollinators and great for people too! Always seek advice before drinking herbal tea or tinctures when pregnant.

Herb name	Description	Uses for people
Rosemary <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary can flower as early as February providing great early nectar for bees. Make sure you don't waterlog the roots.	Lovely on potatoes or with lamb. Add to a steam bath for colds and as a wash for your hair and scalp.
Caraway <i>Carum carvi</i>	A biennial which grows to 20 cm and sends 60 cm flower heads in the second year. Lots of white umbels, irresistible to pollinators.	Use the seeds or 'fruits' for indigestion and for breads, desserts, and pickling. Popular in easter European cuisine
Hyssop <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	Grows to 60 cm, with a very long bloom of blue flowers, perfect for short and long tailed bumblebees but also attractive to other pollinators.	A very strong scented herb, use sparingly in food, it was traditionally used for digestive and respiratory health.
English lavender <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	A favourite of bees! Trip back each year in autumn to encourage new growth the following spring. 'Dutch' Lavendar 'Gros Bleu' (<i>Lavandula x intermedia</i>) is reported to be 4x better for pollinators than our native lavender.	A very pungent herb! Use sparingly in cooking but great for helping calm the mind and a restful night sleep.
Common sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i>	A long season of wonderful purple flowers. You can experiment with lots of other types of salvias, with different leaf colours and scents.	Use as a tea for sore throats. Great for cooking and useful in many types of cuisine.
Wild thyme <i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Produces densely packed heads of pinky-purple flowers from June to September.	A wonderful addition to lots of recipes. Helpful for coughs.
Fennel <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Its tall yellow umbels are a favourite of hoverflies, and the seeds are a treat for birds in autumn and winter	A delicious tea that is great for the digestion. Useful for sweet and savoury cooking.
Chives <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	A wonderful purple ball of flowers loved by bees.	A wonderful addition to a cheese sandwich or salad.
Common mint <i>Mentha spicata</i>	Allowed to flower bees, butterflies and hoverflies will all visit, and the tall stems provide shelter for other animals.	Great for a cup of tea to aid digestion.
Wild marjoram <i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Attractive especially to our smaller butterflies.	Lovely for adding to a pizza or pasta sauce
Angelica <i>Angelica archangelica</i>	Find the right spot for this majestic biennial as it can grow to 2 metres in the second year. For bees moths and butterflies it is worth the wait.	Another aniseed tasting plant use as a tea for digestion or make some candied stems for sweets.
Borage <i>Borago officinalis</i>	Loved by bees, produces late season nectar for your garden, it will keep flowering until the first frost.	Borage supports your adrenal system, have a cup of tea when you are stressed and busy.
Parsley <i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	The little white flowers attract hoverflies. Grow the curly leaf variety too as it is a	Delicious for a wide range of cooking



	perfect place for native ladybirds to shelter.	
Catmint <i>Nepeta cataria</i>	A member of the mint family, abundant flowers for pollinators.	Some cats love it! Dry some and use it to stuff a cat toy
Lemon balm <i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Its Latin name 'melissa' translates to 'bee'! it needs some space so don't try and squeeze this wonderful plant in.	A wonderful tasting tea that calms you down and cheers you up
Wood betony <i>Stachys officinalis</i>	A favourite of ours for sheer determination in shady spots and resilient to drought and waterlogged soil. Beautiful pink/purple self-seeding flowers all summer.	A herb with a rich folklore, called 'the life plant' in Gaelic, drink in a tea to support your nervous system.

5. Shade loving plants

Every bit of available space in your outside area can potentially be adapted to benefit wildlife – even the shady parts under trees, bushes, and shrubs.

To help you get the most out of your space, we've put together a list of wildlife friendly plants you can grow in those awkward shady areas.

Plant	Description	When it flowers
Bugle	Often found carpeting damp grassland and woodland clearings, the blue flower spikes of bugle are very recognisable. A short, creeping plant, it spreads using runners.	April to July
Wood anemone	The wood anemone is a pretty, white spring flower that grows in the dappled shade of ancient woodlands.	March to May
Columbine	The bonnet-shaped, violet-blue flowers of Columbine can be spotted in damp areas in woodlands and in fens.	May to June
Primrose	A hardy, yellow spring plant that favours woodland clearings, hedgerows and grassland habitats.	December to May
Tufted vetch	A scrambling plant with violet flowers. It is a member of the pea family and can be seen along woodland edges, on scrubland and grassland, and at the coast.	June to September
Greater stitchwort	Also known as 'Star-of-Bethlehem' and 'wedding cakes', the greater stitchwort is a star-shaped, white flower often seen in woodlands and along hedgerows.	April to June
Common comfrey	The drooping, tubular, pink flowers of Common comfrey are a familiar sight to many gardeners. This hairy plant can be used as an organic fertiliser and a form of slug control.	May to July
Honeysuckle	A true wildlife 'hotel', Honeysuckle is a climbing plant that caters for all kinds of wildlife: it provides nectar for insects, prey for bats, nest sites for birds and food for small mammals.	February to November
Common dog violet	Our most familiar wild violet. Dog violet has pansy like purple flowers and can be spotted in a range of habitats from woodland to grassland.	April to June
Forget-me-not	A small, handsome plant with azure-blue flowers. In the wild forget-me-nots are found along woodland rides and hedgerows.	April to June



Bluebell	With deep blue, scented flowers that hang from an arching stem these woodland favourites do well in shady spots. Native bluebells have droopy heads, and flowers hang from one side of the stem.	April to June
Yellow Archangel	Yellow archangel is a hairy perennial with heart-shaped or oval, toothed leaves and yellow, 'hooded' flowers up the stem.	April to July
Sweet violet	A beautiful delicate blue-violet/purple wildflower which provides nectar for butterflies in early Spring and has heart-shaped leaves.	March to May

6. Companion planting

When you have a problem with a particular garden visitor the best way forward is to look for nature's own solution, a serious infestation is sometimes a sign that something is out of balance and often you can encourage or introduce natural predators into your garden. This is **THE long term and sustainable solution** and, the one to aim for.

There are more tips for a wildlife friendly solution to unwanted visitors in our **#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions - Management**.

One way to deal with hungry mouths is to grow some sacrificial plants near the plants that you want to protect – some lettuce, cabbage or french marigolds can be very appealing for slugs and snails.

Companion planting works in different ways. Many companion plants have a strong scent that confuses pests looking for a particular plant to lay its eggs on. Planting nectar rich flowers encourages beneficial insects like hoverflies. Hoverfly larvae will eat aphids, scale bugs and mites!

Mixing your planting up will confuse flying insects who are looking for a secure food source for their larvae, if they land several times and keep finding cabbages then they know to lay their eggs. If when they land, they find unsuitable plants, then they will try elsewhere. Planting plants that support each other nutritionally will strengthen your plants and make them less susceptible to damage from being nibbled.

Top tips!

- **Make yourself a planting plan and make sure that everything has enough room to grow.**
- **Try not to grow a monoculture, instead grow a biodiverse bed of herbs, flowers, and vegetables all together.**

Suggested companion planting info:

- Carrots and chives/onions
- Tomatoes and marigolds
- Strawberries and garlic
- Brassicas and clover and trefoil (they protect brassicas from cabbage root fly)
- Nasturtiums and calendula are good to keep slugs away – plant a border of them around your growing area to protect them.
- You can also plant sweetcorn, beans and squash together – the sweetcorn provides the tall stalk for beans to grow up and the squash has space to grow underneath to maximise use of space and suppress weeds.



7. Berry bearing shrubs and trees

Humble hedgerows:

The humble hedgerow is an essential element of any wildlife friendly garden. Not only do hedges provide shelter and essential nesting spaces, but they also offer feeding opportunities for animals of all shapes and sizes.

Hedges offer food in the form of leaves, nectar-rich flowers, berries, fruits, seeds, and nuts. They also create excellent hunting grounds for predators seeking insects and other invertebrates.

Choosing your hedge:

Hawthorn: Hawthorn blossom from May onwards, growing white flowers that are perfect for pollinators. In autumn and winter these white flowers are replaced by red berries (haws), offering a tasty natural food source for birds.

Blackthorn: The sloe or blackthorn is a thorny shrub. It flowers from March onwards, providing pollinating insects with an early source of pollen. During the autumn and winter deep purple fruits (known as 'sloes') ripen on its branches. Blackthorn is an important shrub for many kinds of wildlife.

Holly: This familiar tree may be associated with Christmas, but they offer food and shelter for our wildlife all year round. Throughout spring and summer their white flowers offer pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. In autumn and winter their deep red berries are an important food source for many birds and redwings and fieldfares.

Top tip!

Growing rambling plants, such as wild rose, bramble and honeysuckle through your hedge will offer even more shelter (and food) for wildlife. Ivy is particularly beneficial in providing cover for nesting birds - and it flowers in the autumn when few other nectar sources are available to insects.

Suggested hedge plants for gardens:

Blackthorn - *Prunus spinosa*

Bramble - *Rubus fruticosus*

Common Beech - *Fagus sylvatica*

Common Hawthorn - *Crataegus monogyna*

Common Hornbeam - *Carpinus betulus*

Crab Apple - *Malus sylvestris*

Dog-rose - *Rosa canina*

Field Maple - *Acer campestre*

Guelder Rose - *Viburnum opulus*

Hazel - *Corylus avellana*

Holly - *Ilex aquifolium*

Honeysuckle - *Lonicera periclymenum*

Ivy - *Hedera helix*

Traveller's-joy (aka Old Man's Beard) - *Clematis vitalba*

Wayfaring tree - *Viburnum lantana*

Planting your hedgerow:

Aim to plant your hedge between November and March. During these months trees are dormant, meaning you can move them without harm. Avoid planting in cold, windy, or wet weather, this will reduce the risk of damage to the roots. Most importantly, don't plant in soil that is frozen or waterlogged.

1. Mark out the position of your new hedgerow using string or twine. Create two parallel lines, that are about 50cm apart.



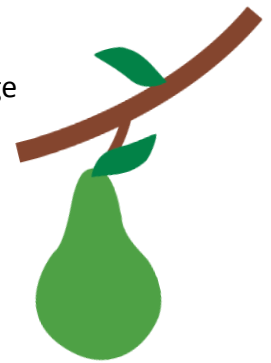
2. Remove any vegetation between your two lines.
3. Mark out the distance between your trees and shrubs using 25cm lengths of cane, creating a zigzag shaped pattern.
4. Plant your trees and or shrubs in groups of the same type.

See [#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Shelter](#) for more information on species and how to plant a hedge.

8. Native fruit trees and berry-bearing shrubs

Introducing fruit trees and berry bearing shrubs and plants will increase available food. The best species to plant will depend on available space and which species you hope to support - native species which flower offer spring pollen and nectar for insects, summer fruit, and then autumn berries or seeds for birds and mammals.

Dwarf and miniature varieties of apple, pear, plum and cherry will grow well in large pots. Look for native UK species that are 'self-pollinating'. Self-fertile dwarf apple varieties include **Braeburn and Red Falstaff**. Pears grow larger than apples even on dwarf root stock - **Concorde** is naturally compact and self-fertile. **Prunus incisa (Kojo-no-mai)** is a delightful small cherry which is steady-growing and compact, making it suitable for growing in containers as is **Prunus cerasus (Sylvia)**.



Advice on buying dwarf fruit trees from *Gardener's World Magazine*:

- Make sure you have the right conditions to grow a dwarf fruit tree – most need a sunny, sheltered spot
- Look for a dwarfing rootstock such as M27 (patio tree) or M26 (cordon) for apple, 'Quince C' for pear and 'Gisela 5' for cherry – the label or product information should give details about the rootstock the tree is grafted onto
- Check whether your tree needs a tree in the same pollination group growing nearby. If you're short on space, go for a 'self-pollinating' variety that does not need a pollination partner
- For the best selection of plants, buy from a specialist tree retailer or fruit tree specialist

Berry-bearing shrubs like currant, gooseberry, pyracantha and berberis all do well in pots and will provide pollen, nectar and fruiting berries for birds. The benefit of bushes like currant and gooseberry is that you can eat the fruit too.

Espalier planting can be a useful technique if you are limited for space. This is where you train fruit trees and bushes to grow along walls - **sunny walls provide space-saving support for fruit trees**. Apples, pears, cherries and peaches grow well if trained flat against a warm, protected wall that will help fruit to ripen. To support the branches, run stainless-steel straining wires between vine eyes attached to the brickwork at 1.5-metre intervals. Fruit trees are available with one to three tiers already formed, ready to train to the wires, so you can attach branches as they spread.

Once established, keep trees pruned annually in late summer – the RHS has some great advice on pruning fruit trees here: www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/pruning-made-easy

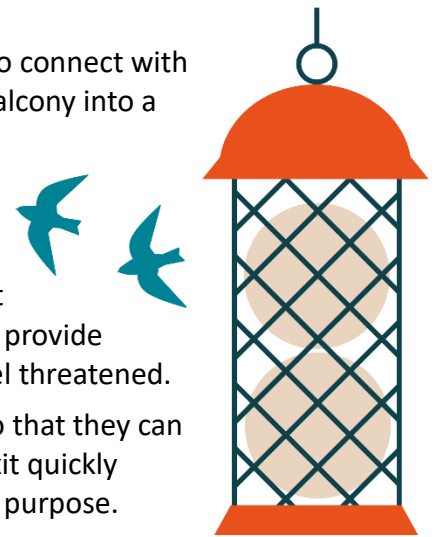


9. Feeding the birds

Feeding birds in your outdoor space is a fun, rewarding and easy way to connect with nature. Follow these simple steps to transform your garden, yard, or balcony into a buffet for birds.

Top tips!

- **Position your feeders in a relatively open area away from bushes where predators can hide** - birds will feel safer and visit more. Hanging them from or near trees works well as the trees provide cover from the elements and a place for bird to fly to if they feel threatened.
- **Position your feeders somewhere they have a perch nearby** so that they can hide in a safe space and watch to see if the coast is clear and exit quickly when there is danger. Trees, shrubs or hedges are great for this purpose.
- **Hanging feeders are best to deter disease – remember to wash all feeders with soap and water regularly to keep them clean so birds stay healthy and disease-free.**



When to feed birds:

Consistency is key. Give the birds in your neighbourhood a helping hand by keeping your feeders well stocked all year round.

Birds are creatures of habit, so once your feeder is fully established your regulars will depend on it as a consistent source of food. Keep your diners happy by sticking to a feeding routine and making sure there's always something for them to eat and drink.

What should I feed birds?

- **Seed mixes:** A blended mix of seeds to attract a greater number of species.
- **Straight seeds:** Unlike seed mixes, straight seeds consist of one seed type. Common straight seeds are black sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts, oil seed rape, crushed or chopped peanuts and red and white millet.
- **Husk-free seed mixes:** A blended mix of seeds that have had their husks removed. This means there's less mess to clean up and birds that can't crack husks (such as blackbirds) can also eat them.
- **Suet (also called fat):** Lots of birds love suet. It provides a vital source of energy, especially during cold winter months.
- **Dried mealworms:** Soaking dried mealworms in warm water for 20-60 minutes before putting out makes them easier to digest - especially for younger birds.
- **Fresh and dried fruit:** Fruits such as apples and pears cut in half and put on a table, or the ground are excellent for many species of garden birds. Dried fruit like raisins and sultanas are great too.

Feeding top tip:

1. **Help feed the birds in your garden by planting food sources.** Holly, elder, hawthorn, ivy, rowan, honeysuckle, and dogwood. They all provide fruit, berries hips and attract tasty insects. See [#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Connectivity](#) for more information about planting for birds.



- 2. Over feeding can create a surplus of food which can attract unwanted visitors like rats.**
Once you know how much the birds in your garden eat daily, put a mark on your feeder, so you never overfill them.
- 3. If you are concerned that your bird feeding is helping out some birds more than others, then try altering your seed mixes or feeder types.** See our **#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Connectivity** if you're feeding birds near woodlands for extra advice.

Foods to avoid:

- **Salt:** Salt is very bad for birds. Make sure the food you have on offer isn't salted.
- **Cooking fats:** These often have a high salt content and can smear on feathers reducing their waterproofing ability.
- **Dog and cat food:** Tinned meats are popular with birds, but attract cats which threaten birds.
- **Mouldy and stale food:** Some moulds can cause respiratory infections in birds.
- **Milk:** Birds do not naturally drink milk, so drinking it can cause severe digestive issues.

The best seat in the house

Do you have a favourite restaurant or dish? The birds in your garden have their favourite meals and places to eat too. Some prefer hanging out at feeders, other prefer tables and some are happy to eat off the floor. The table below shows what food the most common garden birds prefer and where they like to eat.

Bird Species	Preferred food types	Preferred feeder types
Starling	Mealworms Suet pellets or balls Sultanas	Ground feeders Hanging feeders
Robin	Sultanas Mealworms Suet pellets or balls Sunflower hearts	Ground feeders
House sparrow	Sunflower hearts Black sunflower seeds Mealworms	Ground feeders Hanging feeders
Blackbird	Sunflower hearts Crushed or chopped peanuts Sultanas Suet pellets or balls Mealworms	Ground feeder
Chaffinch	Sunflower hearts Black sunflower seeds Crushed or chopped peanuts	Ground feeders Hanging feeders
Great tit and blue tit	Sunflower hearts Black sunflower seeds Crushed or chopped peanuts Suet pellets or balls Mealworms	Hanging feeder



Goldfinch	Sunflower hearts Black sunflower seeds Nyjer seeds	Hanging feeder
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Planting for birds:

A great way to help birds is by **planting species that provide seed heads** for them to eat over the Autumn, or trees and shrubs that produce fruit or berries.

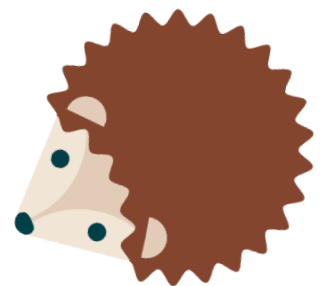
Type of plant	Species	Why are they good for birds?
Flowers for borders, beds and pots	Teasel <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	This tall plant produces striking seedheads in Autumn which are a favourite of goldfinches, sparrows and buntings who all feast of their compact seed heads.
	Sunflower <i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Once your sunflowers have finished flowering, leave them to form large seedheads. These provide plenty of seeds tightly packed at the centre, which provide oil-rich nourishment throughout autumn for finches, and long-tailed tits.
	Scabious <i>Scabiosa</i> (numerous species)	Scabious seeds are a food source for seed-eating birds like finches. These plants bear flowers which are like pin cushions and both annual and perennial varieties are available.
	Cornflower/Knapweed <i>Centaurea</i> (numerous species)	There are many different varieties, some are annual/biennial flowers (flower for one or two years) while others are perennial (flower year after year) The seed heads are popular with finches, particularly goldfinches.
Climbers	Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera</i> (numerous species)	In summer, the scented flowers attract insects, and in autumn the berries provide food for birds like thrushes, warblers, bullfinches, robins, and blackbirds. (Please avoid <i>Lonicera japonica</i> as this is invasive)
	Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i>	Their flowers attract insect which in turn feed robins and wrens. Their black berries are enjoyed by a wide range of birds including thrushes, starlings, blackbirds and waxwings.
Bushes and hedge plants	Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	In winter, holly bushes become laden with clusters of small red berries, which are an important food source for many birds including song thrushes, blackbirds, fieldfares and redwings.
	Guelder rose <i>Viburnum opulus</i>	This native deciduous shrub bears heavy clusters of glossy berries from November through to March. These are loved by mistle thrushes and bullfinches and makes an excellent hedging plant too.
	Pyracantha Pyracantha	This spikey shrub provides both shelter and food for birds as it produces bright red, orange or yellow berries. According to gardening experts, the "Pyracantha 'Orange



		Glow" is considered one of the best Pyracantha varieties for birds, as it produces a large quantity of bright orange berries.
Trees (aim for as much variety as you can)	Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	The red haw berries are a favourite of blackbirds, starlings, fieldfares, redwings and many finches. The leaves are the foodplant for caterpillars of many species of moth, providing food for baby birds in spring.
	Rowan <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan is a small, slender tree that is often found on mountains, heathland, and along woodland edges. This popular garden tree provides pollen and nectar for insects through the Spring, which in turn provides food for birds, and it produces clusters of bright red berries throughout late Summer and Autumn. These berries are a favourite food of birds, such as waxwings, redwings, and other thrushes.
	Crab apple <i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Excellent trees for birds as their small apples are a primary food source for many species including robins, blackbirds, thrushes and starlings. They also attract insects and are the food plant of a variety of caterpillars, so they support birds year-round.
	Cherry plum <i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	Cherry plum is one of the first prunus species to blossom in the UK so is great for pollinators and the fruit are popular with birds.
	Silver birch <i>Betula pendula</i>	A spindly tree with thin branches and papery bark. In spring, the silver birch grows catkins, which it uses to distribute pollen. Birch seeds are popular food sources for many small birds, including siskins, goldfinches and greenfinches.

10. Feeding Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs love to eat creepy crawlies. In fact, nearly 100% of their natural diet is made up of beetles, earthworms, and caterpillars. If you're looking to attract hedgehogs to your outside space, you should start by providing mini habitats for insects.



Follow these easy steps to get started:

- **Grow pollinator friendly plants:** Attract insects for hedgehogs to eat by growing pollinator friendly plants.
- **Use garden compost:** Compost encourages worms, woodlice, and beetles into your outside space – the perfect treat for hedgehogs.
- **Create a leaf or wood pile:** Not only are small piles of wood and leaves ideal for hibernating hedgehogs, they also attract edible creepy crawlies.
- **Create a bug hotel:** Bug hotels are great for bugs and hungry hedgehogs. Read our guide and learn how to build your own from scratch.



- **Let your grass grow long:** Even a small patch of long grass will attract more insects into your outside space. Save yourself a job – leave the mower in the shed and watch the wildlife flock to your garden.

Supplementary feeding:

If you've got hedgehogs in your garden, provide a shallow bowl of clean water and supplementary food if you wish. Meat-based cat biscuits are best. You can buy specially made hedgehog food, but cat biscuits are just as good. If you have lots of cats nearby you may want to create an enclosed feeding station to prevent cats from accessing their food.

Remember to include two entrances to prevent squabbling between hedgehogs if you are lucky enough to have more than one visits your garden. Placing food in several locations in your garden can also prevent aggression at food bowls.

Hedgehogs are lactose intolerant so please do not give them milk. Bread is low in energy so also should be avoided.

Research suggests that unpredictable supplementary feeding is beneficial e.g. moving the feeding spots around and scattering food in a more natural way.

For more information: www.hedgehogstreet.org.uk



Image credit: Jo Rawson

Thinking big for hedgehogs:

Did you know hedgehogs love to travel? Some hedgehogs will walk up to 1-2km per night, over home ranges as big as 10-20 hectares in size. This means that in suburban areas, one hedgehog could range across an entire housing estate or neighbourhood.

Taking action for hedgehogs in your outside space is the perfect place to start. Why not encourage your neighbours to do the same? Consider working with your local community to create a network of hedgehog friendly outside spaces. By starting a sequence of small actions, you can make an incredible difference for your local hedgehogs.



This toolkit has been created with credit to The Wildlife Trusts.

