



Inviting
wildlife
into your
garden

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How many boxes can you check?

★ 10 and over - bronze

★ 15 and over - silver

★ 20 and over - gold!

♥ Not quite made it yet? Make a pledge to welcome wildlife into your garden!

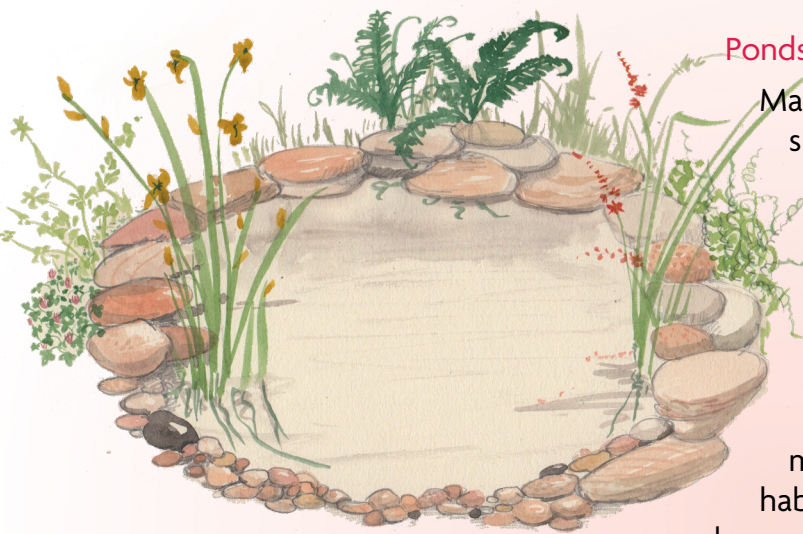


Habitats



Trees, hedges, climbers or bushes

Gardens often replicate a woodland edge, with a mix of full sun, dappled sunshine and full shade: the best habitat for a thriving ecosystem. The types of plants will depend on the size of your garden, but birds love the safety and height of a tree; hedgehogs, reptiles and amphibians all like cover closer to the ground; and insects will not only use plants as food but also as a place to shelter. The leaf litter from deciduous plants should be treasured as it feeds the soil and provides habitat for yet more insects — but don't forget about evergreens as their permanent leaves offer shelter and wind protection all winter long.



Ponds and bog gardens

Many creatures will drink from a pond so make sure there is a shallow slope for access. A wildlife pond should not contain fish as they will eat tadpoles and other invertebrates. Ponds don't even need a pump, although do remove leaf litter in autumn to prevent algae build-up. It can take 10+ years for a pond to settle naturally, so you can speed this along with a filter. But a silted-up pond with lots of plants makes the perfect bog garden — a great wildlife habitat. If some gardens had ponds, and others had bog gardens, then creatures could travel from one to the other through gaps in the fences.

Log pile/stumpery

Rotting wood is a vital — and increasingly rare — habitat. You can make a lovely garden feature out of a stump of a dead tree left in situ, a pile of architectural stumps, or by burying 1m-long branches 50cm into the soil. A pile of twigs in a shady corner provides a home for invertebrates and other mini beasts that hedgehogs and bats feed on, and is often where you will find amphibians and hedgehogs hiding.

Bare earth/bank

Ground-nesting solitary bees and other insects love a patch of bare earth, particularly in the sun. If you see little holes, keep an eye on them and see what comes out! The no-dig method (see p.5) will ensure no larvae are disturbed that are developing underground.



Green roof

Sheds, log stores, bike sheds and car ports can all be a place for a green roof. Make sure what you plant will withstand drought, such as sedums, and that the structure is waterproof and sturdy enough to take the weight. Here's how you do it: <https://bit.ly/32aCjvU>

Meadows, long grass and wildflower borders

Providing a wide range of flower shapes, that flower in succession throughout the year, will make sure pollinators have plenty of nectar. You can use many types of wildflower in your borders to give you colour, but in your lawn there are only a few that will grow in competition with the grass. Wildflowers and grasses are not only beautiful but are food for many insect larvae. If you have space, leaving an area of lawn uncut all year can provide fantastic habitat for invertebrates; however, some types of wildflower can withstand cutting the grass once a month, and can provide a splash of colour between cuts as well as valuable nectar for pollinators.

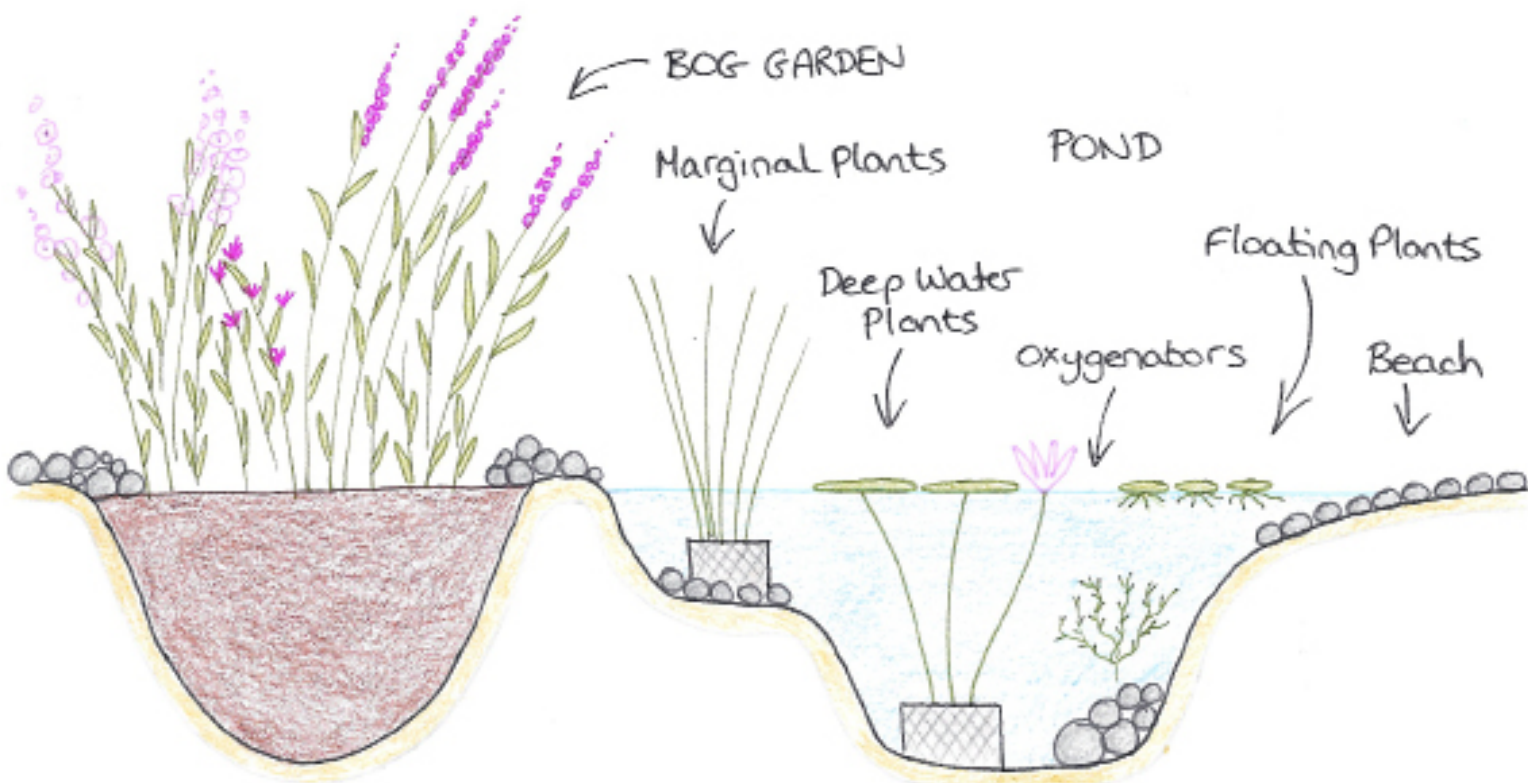
How to build a pond

If you have a very small space, a pre-moulded pond is ideal. However, if you have an unusual shaped space or want a larger pond, a liner is definitely easier.

When digging the pond, the deep area should be around 2ft deep, and the shelves for marginal plants should be around 1ft deep. If you think this is too deep, remember you can always make it more shallow with pebbles, but you can't dig it deeper once it's set up! Stones and pebbles in the water provide attachment sites for beneficial bacteria, helping keep the water clean.

Make sure your shelves for marginal plants are wide enough — at least 1ft wide or your plant pots will topple off the edge into deeper water.

Before you lay it down, cushion the pond liner from sharp stones with sand or old carpet.



Around half the water's surface should be shaded by plants, to keep the water cool and reduce algae build-up, and these can be from plants growing up from deep water, like lilies, surface floating plants, or marginals creeping across the surface, like water mint. If your pond is 1m² or less, choose a pygmy-type lily, as lilies can take up a lot of space! 'Frog bit' is a great surface-floating plant that comes back every year and looks like a mini lily leaf.

One of the most important features for a wildlife pond is a shallow slope on at least one side. Create a beach using pebbles or sand — if you are worried about the liner showing, you can even stick these to the liner using Aquascape foam.

A wildlife pond doesn't have to have a pump and filter for oxygen, but it will need submerged oxygenating plants. You can however use a pump and filter to fix any problems to create clear water quicker.

Avoid debris such as fallen leaves from falling into the water, or algae and duckweed will build up. Rotting leaves increase the nutrient level, and for a clear pond, this needs to be kept low. Make sure you do not site your pond under a tree. The best time to remove silt is in the winter. Few amphibians overwinter in ponds (apart from some male frogs), preferring to shelter on land.

Some great marginal plants for small ponds include: water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), cotton grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), irises (although avoid native yellow flag in a small pond), and pickerel weed (*Pontederia cordata*).

You can place a bog garden in a separate area, or you can use the same piece of liner to create a bog garden close by. A pile of stones between these to hide the liner can provide overwintering habitat for amphibians.

What is the no-dig method?

The no-dig method can also be called minimal-till, and it just means that you avoid digging the soil as much as you can, in both your flowerbeds and vegetable patch. There are many reasons to do this: in nature very little soil disturbance happens — leaves fall on the surface which rot down and provide nutrients; worms and mycorrhizal fungi spread the nutrients around and keep the soil aerated. Digging will disrupt the complex balance of the soil, will release carbon dioxide and kill many of the mini beasts and ground-dwelling invertebrates.

Apply compost to the surface as a mulch; the only reason to dig is when landscaping your garden, digging parsnips etc, moving perennials around, or to remove the roots of perennial weeds such as brambles and dock. Even compaction can be solved in time, and by sticking to paths.

The no-dig method was pioneered by Charles Dowding, and there's plenty more about this on his website: www.charlesdowding.co.uk.

Amphibians & Reptiles



Food

Slow worms, newts, toads and frogs eat slugs, snails and aphids, so they are a gardener's best friend! They will also feast on various invertebrates, insects, worms, ants and spiders. Grass snakes actually eat amphibians, so you will only find them where their prey is plentiful. They have a 12-hectare range so make sure there is a gap in your boundary or fence to allow them to roam.

Water

A pond is vital for amphibians to complete their life cycle; their tadpoles eat algae and plant matter until they are big enough to leave for land. Make sure there is a shallow ramp for access. Grass snakes will also hunt in ponds if you are lucky enough to see one.



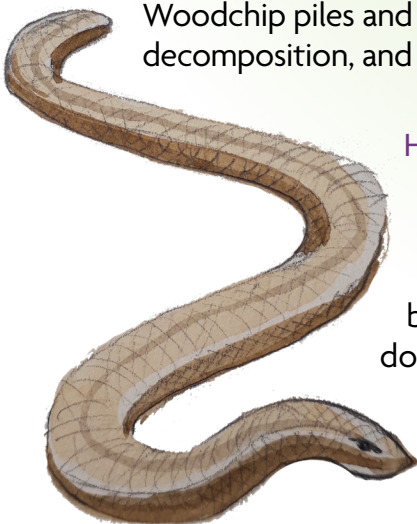
Shelter

Amphibians love spending time in damp places, such as a bog garden or in log or twig piles. If creating a wood pile or stumpery, site it in the shade. They will hibernate under cover, burying themselves in the soil or leaf litter.

Both reptiles and amphibians will hide in stone piles, seeking out a small sheltered space above or below ground level, to see out the winter months.

Reptiles will be attracted to warm places, such as sheets of metal, rockery stones or a stone wall heating up in sunlight, where they will warm themselves by conduction. Planting vegetation with a mix of different heights, or a mown path in long grass on a south-facing slope, can offer the perfect mix of open space to bask, as well as shelter to hide.

Woodchip piles and compost heaps will also attract reptiles due to the heat from decomposition, and sometimes they will make a nest there.



Hazards

Provide hiding places from their main predator: cats. Link the pond up with plants in the borders to provide cover as a corridor. Avoid artificial chemicals such as pesticides. And do be careful if you are cutting long grass, as toads tend to hunker down rather than hop away.

For more info check out www.froglife.org

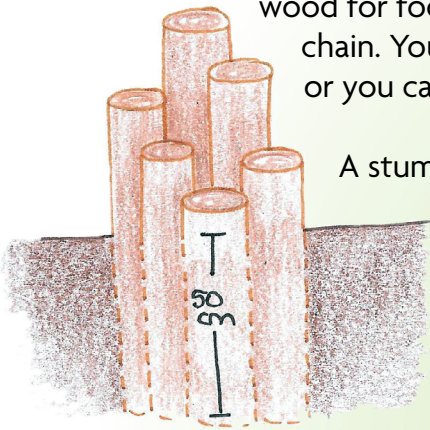
Hibernacula

A hibernaculum is a shelter occupied during the winter by a dormant animal (such as an insect, snake, bat, or mammal). Creating places in our gardens for wildlife to overwinter is really important as so much natural habitat has been lost.



A log pile or stumpery

Amphibians love to hide in crevices found between logs and especially love a damp, shady spot with leaf litter. There are many insects that will also use rotting wood for food and shelter, providing a meal for creatures higher up the food chain. You can get creative and make a feature out of wood, or you can simply have a pile of twigs in a hidden corner.



A stumpery is made from the stumps of trees that have had to be removed. Pile them up, with their architectural roots on display, and pack soil in some gaps where you can plant shade-loving plants like ferns and cyclamen.

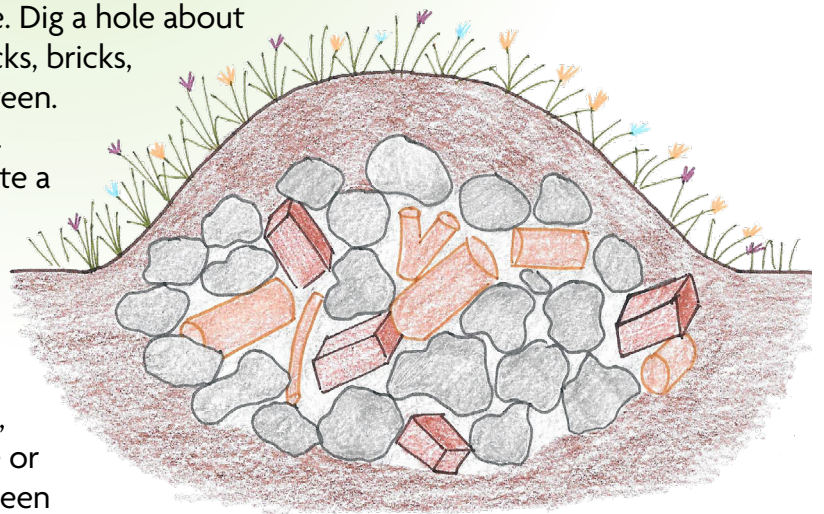
Add height and interest to a border by building a log pyramid. Dig a hole 50cm deep and put in varying length logs, up to a metre or so, vertically, then pack the soil around them to hold them in place.

A log pile of any shape and size is great. A feature can be made from a pile with the largest on the bottom, smallest on top, and even a thatched 'roof' with cut long grass on top.

A stone hibernaculum

Reptiles and amphibians love to hide in crevices between stones, so you can create a garden feature with a pile of stones, rockery, or even a dry stone wall.

If you have enough space, you can build an underground chamber, ideally in a sunny spot so it warms up in the daytime. Dig a hole about 50cm deep and 1.5 metres across. Fill with rocks, bricks, logs, branches, leaving plenty of gaps in between. Cover the pile with soil (to about 50cm high). Plant meadow seeds over the mound to create a feast for summer pollinators. Some designs include a drainpipe for access but this is not needed, and if the pile were to settle over time, the pipe could tilt channelling the water straight in, or trapping a creature inside. Mice are likely to enjoy this home too, and will make a natural tunnel which a reptile or amphibian can then follow. Reptiles may be seen basking on the mound in the spring and autumn.



Tin sheets

Corrugated metal will heat up in the sun and can become a useful place to find slow worms and other reptiles in the warmer months. Knowing where you can find wildlife is important to encourage children to engage with them. However, if cats, birds and ferrets get to know that this place is where their prey hides it can become unsafe for the reptiles over time, so keep moving the sheet around the garden.

Compost heaps and woodchip piles

The heat created by decomposition can provide an ideal nest site for slow worms and grass snakes. If you want to use your compost in the summer, be aware a grass snake will lay eggs in June, to hatch in August and September, so it's best to spread your compost in the autumn. Making really good garden compost is an art form, which involves regular turning, and can create excessive heat, so is less likely to create good habitat for larger creatures. Nests are more likely to be found in heaps with access from the sides, that slowly decompose and are used infrequently.



Hedgehogs



Hedgehogs have recently been declared vulnerable to extinction so we must do all we can to help them out.

Food

Hedgehogs eat bugs and slugs. So if your garden plants get munched by slugs they are your perfect companion! So to help:

1. Never use slug pellets. Apart from killing their food they can poison hedgehogs too.
2. Make lots of habitat for bugs and insects, plant flowers to attract them into your garden, leave leaves undisturbed or in piles. Heaps of twigs or rotting logs are perfect too. The no-dig method (see p.5) will increase the number of worms for them to eat.
3. Hedgehogs love to forage under low lying shrubs and hedges. Dense and prickly shrubs such as pyracantha are great, providing protection from predators such as cats.
4. If you know you have a resident, you can leave out wet cat or dog food, or specialist hedgehog food, but never feed them bird seed. As carnivores they can get very ill from eating this. They are also lactose intolerant, so don't feed them bread and milk either.

Water

Leave out a dish of water and refresh the water daily. If you have a pond they may drink from there, but make sure they can get out, with a shallow slope or ramp, or they could drown.

Shelter

Wild areas, compost heaps, and large piles of leaves and wood can provide nesting and shelter sites. Always check a bonfire before lighting it. If you don't have space for a natural habitat, you can make a nest box, which will take up about 60x60cm of ground space, and will protect them from predators. A good design is here <https://bit.ly/388NgBU>.

Access

Hedgehogs will travel around a mile per night in search of food. So make sure you have a gap in your fence (preferably more than one) and encourage your neighbours to have one too. They need to be at least 13cmx13cm.

Hazards

Discarded netting and uncovered drains can trap hedgehogs. If strimming, be careful! And always check for hedgehogs before lighting a bonfire. If you find an injured hedgehog, contact Secret World Wildlife Rescue for advice on 01278 783250.

For an excellent 'five-point plan' on how to make life good for your hedgehogs watch this short video: <https://bit.ly/329lfpW>. Or visit <https://bit.ly/2lgUbOG>



Creating a hedgehog home

There are lots of different types of hedgehog homes you can build, making it more likely you will see one in your garden. The most expensive is not always the best. Let TTW know what type of home is being used by a hedgehog, then we can share the information.

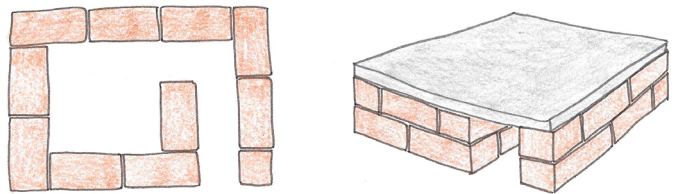
You can simply create a pile of twigs and leaves. It is very natural for a hedgehog to bury under here and create a nest itself, if it is dry enough underneath. This will provide the perfect balance of security, ventilation and insulation. If a hedgehog does not choose to live there, it will be great habitat for their food: slugs, snails and invertebrates.

Here are a few general guidelines to follow, if you are going to make a hedgehog house:

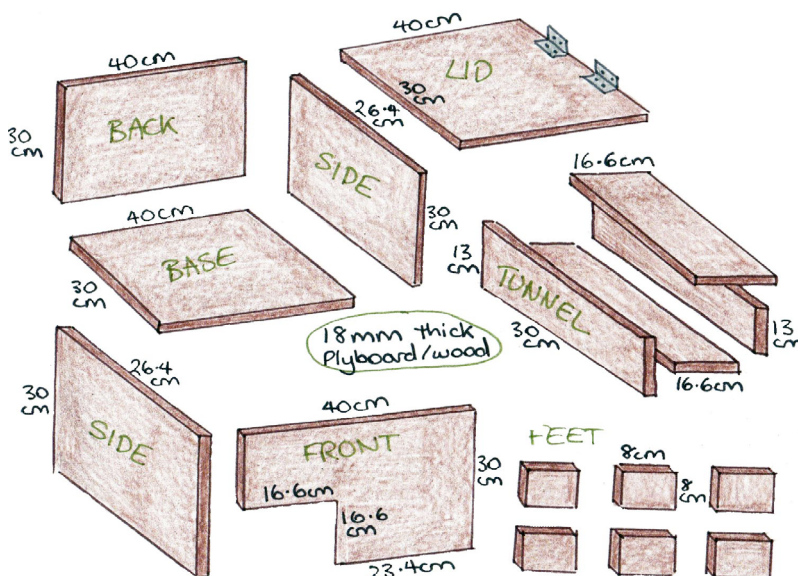
Choose a sheltered spot, somewhere quiet and shady, ideally next to a hedge, and where the ground isn't going to get too wet. Clear any vegetation here. Have the entrance facing south if possible. An entrance tunnel will make it difficult for foxes and cats to reach baby hedgehogs, and a 90-degree turn makes it even safer. Make sure the inside stays dry, with it raised up on feet, a slight slope to the tunnel, and having ventilation incorporated in the design.

Put some dry bedding (autumn leaves, hay or newspaper) inside. Piling up leaves, soil and twigs on top will help to insulate the home. Clear it out once a year (late March to early April) to prevent the build-up of pests. Do not clean it out if a hedgehog is in residence!

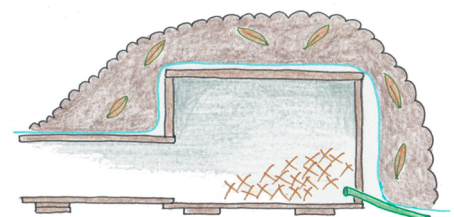
A hedgehog bunker can be made from bricks with a paving slab on top. You do not need to use mortar, but sand can help stop the bricks rocking. Stagger the bricks for stability, like making a wall.



To build your own hedgehog box from a sheet of plyboard, Somerset Wildlife Trust recommend using birch plywood. This is because does not use toxic glues to stick the layers together. The measurements below are for 18mm board: if you are using 20mm untreated solid wood or untreated pallets, then refer to <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home>. This design does not have either a 90 degree turn nor a sloping tunnel - can you make one to have these two features too? You can get a good shop-bought one from the British Hedgehog Society.



Attaching the lid using hinges will make cleaning easier. You can provide ventilation by drilling a hole that will fit a length of hosepipe into the back of the box. Cover the box in a sheet of polythene to protect it from rain before topping with soil and leaves.



Birds



Food

Birds eat seeds, berries, insects and other mini beasts, and even small mammals, such as mice. You can grow plants that produce fruit — even those we eat too, such as crabapples or redcurrants, that birds will love. Windfall apples will attract blackbirds, fieldfares and redwings. Thistles, teasels and long grass provide seeds, and making your garden a habitat for insects will feed birds such as swifts, swallows and house martins.

Bird feeders are great but be aware they are an expensive alternative to providing food they can forage for in a wildlife-friendly garden, and that feeders need cleaning regularly. You can choose from a wide range of feeders and types of food for different species:

Peanuts (whole): tits, nuthatches and greater spotted woodpeckers;

(chopped): robins, blackbirds and dunnocks

Black sunflower seeds (with shell): green finches, great tits, coal tits;

(without shell) blackbirds, robins, song thrushes

Niger seed: goldfinches, siskins and redpolls

Red millet: tree sparrows

Sultanas: blackbirds, starlings and song thrushes

Suet: long-tailed tits, starlings, nuthatches, great spotted woodpeckers

Mealworms: tits, blackbirds, robins and sparrows.



Water

Birds will use a pond to bathe in and drink from as long as it has a slope and a few stones of different sizes. Remember to crack the ice in winter. Alternatively, you could install a bird bath.

Shelter

Trees, ivy and bushes provide natural shelter, and birds will make nests in the dense cover, away from predators, so this is very important in a bird-friendly garden. You can also put up nest boxes, to provide extra habitat.

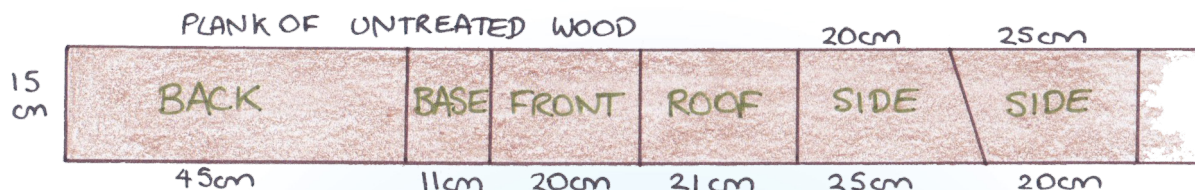
Hazards

If you have many cats in the area, chances are birds will avoid your garden. You may wish to avoid feeding birds in this case, or they will be lured into harm's way. Perhaps focus more on providing habitat for insects, and install swift boxes under the roof eaves.



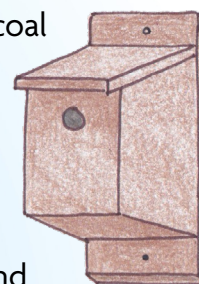
How to make a bird box

Cut a plank of wood (make sure this is untreated wood) to the measurements shown.



You can use 20 x 2.5cm nails to put most of it together, but use two 2.5cm screws for the lid, as you will then be able to lift it off to clean it in the autumn.

Create the hole using a wide wood drill bit and make sure you use sandpaper around the hole and edges to prevent splinters. A 25mm hole will attract blue, coal and marsh tits and a 28mm hole attracts great tits. House sparrows need a minimum diameter of 32mm. Robins prefer a large gap rather than a hole, so if you cut the front panel shorter and leave several inches above it, you may attract nesting robins.



When siting a bird box, leave a clear flight path but have natural cover nearby, mounting 5-10ft off the ground, facing north or northeast to avoid bright sun and prevailing wind.

Do not site too near a bird feeder as there will be too much bird traffic.

Sparrows like to nest in colonies, so you can place the nest boxes closer together. However other species prefer more space, so mount them in different parts of the garden.

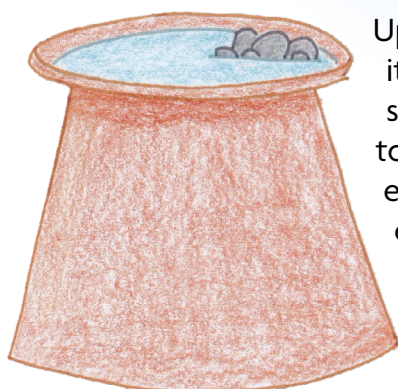
If splashing out on a shop-bought nest box, woodcrete will insulate from hot and cold, plus prevent predators entering, as the hard material prevents teeth and beaks from breaking in.

<https://www.livingwithbirds.com/nest-boxes/schwegler-woodcrete-favourites/the-official-woodcrete>

How to make fat balls

No need to waste fat from lamb, pork or beef. Save up any bits you cut off meat (avoiding chicken and cured meat), cook in a low oven so the fat melts, sieve, mix with bird seed, then pour into a mould such as a half coconut, or wait until cold to form into balls.

How to make a bird (and bee) bath



Upturn a terracotta pot, and glue the saucer that comes with it to the base. Place stones in the saucer to provide birds somewhere to perch, and so insects can use it to drink from too. Put it in an open site and refresh the water regularly, especially during spells of dry weather.

Bats



Food

The main food for most British bats is flies; a common pipistrelle can eat around 3,000 midges, mosquitoes and other small flies per night, meaning bats provide excellent natural pest control. Other species will also eat moths, beetles and daddy-long-legs. So the best way of feeding bats is to garden for the benefit of insects: leave leaves and seed heads over winter, and plant a range of wildflowers, especially pale-coloured, night-scented and night-opening flowers such as jasmine, honeysuckle and evening primrose, as well as lots of our natives including mallows, knapweed and herbs. For more information, including a list of what flowers to plant, visit <https://bit.ly/3jPFejH>.



Water

Bats need to drink too and will visit the shallow side of a pond. Ponds and bog gardens are also a great habitat for insects, so they fulfil two needs for bats.

Shelter

Planting trees, and hedges if you have space, will help bats to navigate. Bats often use features such as hedgerows, tree lines and watercourses as commuting pathways between roosts and foraging areas. This type of habitat also provides shelter, allowing insects to gather, with the highest densities of bats occurring where insects are most plentiful.

Bats naturally roost in hollows of mature trees, but these are increasingly uncommon so they will use buildings that have access points. Putting up a bat box can help with the loss of their natural roosting sites, but it is illegal to open the box (so potentially disturbing them) once it's up. So make sure your bat box is sited carefully, close to hedges and tree lines that bats fly along.

<https://bit.ly/3kPIU4K>.

Hazards

Reducing light pollution will be a big help for bats as it confuses nighttime insects. Cats are predators for bats, so keep your cat indoors at night, from half an hour before dusk.



Bat boxes for hibernation or maternity roosts

It's important to mount your box high up, 4-5 metres up, so gazebos, garden walls and sheds are often not high enough.

Under the eaves of a building is good, as they offer some shelter, but make sure it is not lit by street lighting or light pollution from other sources, as most bat species find artificial lighting very disturbing.

If mounting on a building, what aspect is it? This can influence the type of roost you provide.

Summer maternity roosts are better in warm, dry spaces, sheltered from wind but unshaded for most of the day, and on a southeast to southwest aspect. Winter hibernation roosts are better in cooler damp spaces.

Ensure the boxes are appropriately fitted to avoid the risk of them falling off. The boxes should be checked at least annually and after high winds to ensure they are still securely in place. You can undertake the non-invasive checks above without needing a licence. Bat boxes must not be opened by anyone except a licensed bat worker, so make or choose one with an entrance slit along the bottom, so that accumulated bat waste can drop out of the box.

When mounting on a tree, use headless or domed nails not fully hammered home to allow for the tree's growth. Ensure the bats' approach to the box is not impeded – for example by branches – and clear away underneath the box so the bats can land easily before crawling up into the entrance.

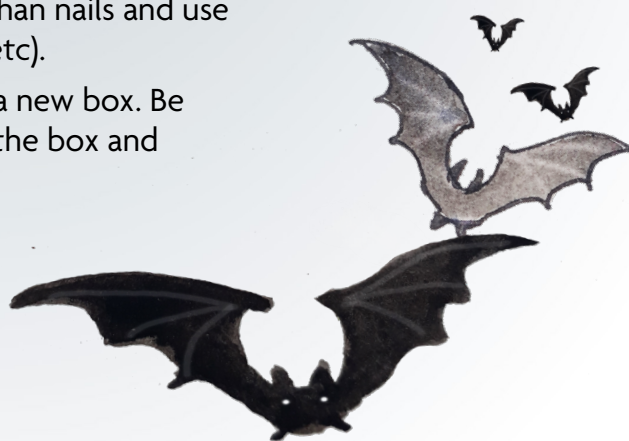
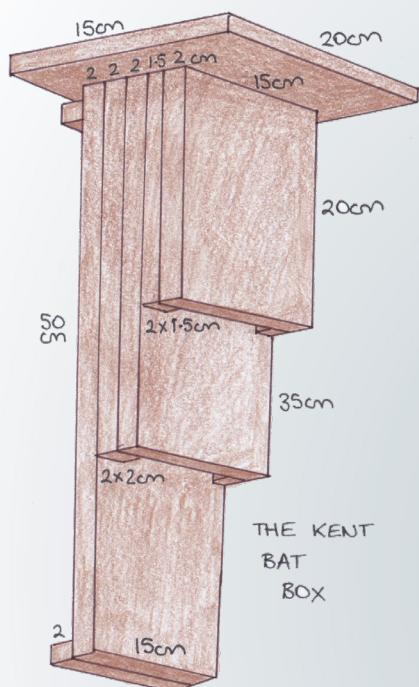
Boxes ready made out of woodcrete, or those that are built integrally into the walls of a house can be used, or you can make your own as shown here.

Use untreated, rough sawn wood, for bats to cling to.

Bats do not like draughts and prefer well-insulated boxes where the temperature and humidity remain constant. The entrance slit should be no more than 15-20mm wide and there should be no gaps between the joints.

To increase longevity of the box, use screws rather than nails and use exterior grade screws (galvanised, coated, stainless, etc).

Sometimes it can take several years for bats to find a new box. Be patient! Look out for droppings and staining below the box and listen for 'chattering' during summer days.





Insects



Food for adults

When choosing flowers, look for different shapes. Flat flowers like daisies and members of the carrot family attract smaller insects and beetles, and deep trumpet flowers attract moths. Try to avoid double or frilly flowers as these have very little use for insects. A wild herbaceous border, designed with perennial and biannual flowers for all seasons, punctuated with flowering shrubs, and cornfield annuals to fill any gaps, can provide nectar for pollinators throughout the year.



Food for larvae

To complete their life cycle, caterpillars and other larvae need food to eat. Some will munch through leaves, with some/many eating only native plants. Some need long grasses and others eat dead wood. Dragonfly and damselfly larvae (known as nymphs) feed on other aquatic prey such as beetles, worms and tadpoles, so they'll need a pond. Stag beetle larvae feed on decaying wood underground, so a stumpery (see p.7) is ideal for them, as long as it is left undisturbed for several years.

Water

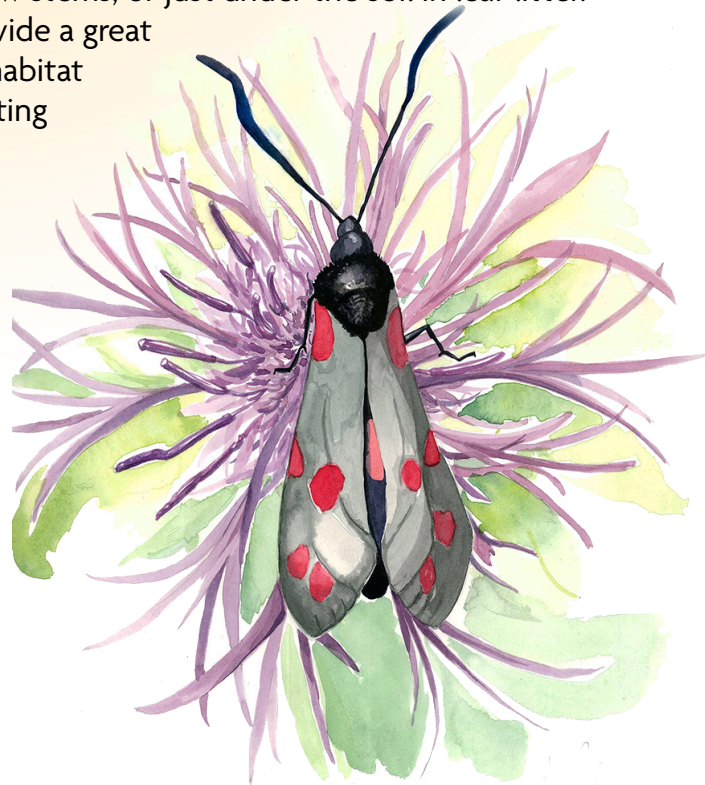
Insects need to drink too. A shallow section of pond with stones so insects can lean in to drink safely can also be replicated by a dish of water with some pebbles in the bottom. Just change the water daily.

Shelter

Leave areas of your garden untidy over winter, leaving seed heads uncut, and leaf litter on the ground. Many larvae overwinter at the base of grass clumps, in the nooks and crannies of seed heads, attached as pupae to the stems of plants, or inside hollow stems, or just under the soil in leaf litter. Long grass, bushes, trees, climbers and rotting wood provide a great habitat all year round. The no-dig method protects the habitat underground, for all sorts of mini beasts and ground-nesting solitary bees. <https://bit.ly/3oQbM0x>.

Hazards

Avoid pesticides at all times. There is no need for them if the ecosystem is functioning correctly. Some insects are carnivores and will help control unwanted pests. For example, ladybird larvae, tiny parasitic wasps, small toads and birds all eat aphids!



Well designed insect houses

However well intentioned, some 'bug hotels' can actually be a hazard for bees as they provide ideal habitat for their predators and parasites, or can get mouldy and damp.

Follow these guidelines when choosing a shop-bought one or making your own:

- Small is better.
- Providing multiple small units that focus on different species means you can provide the right conditions for each. Certain types of wasps and flies prey on solitary bees, so that will be more of a problem if too many bees are nesting in the same place.
- Solitary bees should be kept away from earwigs, spiders, ants or slugs, so bug hotels containing pine cones, moss, etc. should be separate from those with tubes.

Homes for tube-nesting bees: red mason bees, leaf-cutter bees and bell bees

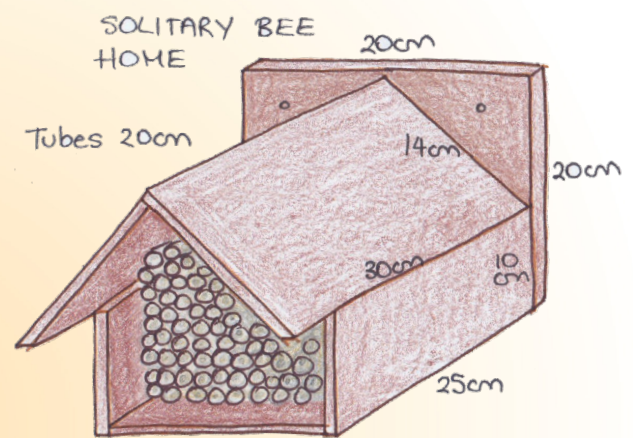
Have a sloping, overhanging roof, to protect them from rain, and avoid plastic or glass materials which can attract condensation.

Tubes should be smooth, without splinters, 2-10mm in diameter. You can drill into untreated wood blocks, use bamboo canes (20cm long and cut just below a joint), bundles of dry, hollow stems from herbaceous plants, or dried reeds. Cardboard tubes (used by red mason bees) need a closed back, replacing regularly and bringing inside during winter.

Boxes should be made from untreated wood, a minimum of 20cm deep, and must have a solid back, or the tubes will act like wind tunnels.

Sited in full sun, facing south, or southeast, at least a metre off the ground, with no vegetation blocking the sun or entrances to the tunnels. Fix it securely to prevent wind damage. Some bees, such as mason bees, can come back year after year, and larvae can take up to 11 months to pupate, so take care to provide a permanent home if encouraging a new colony.

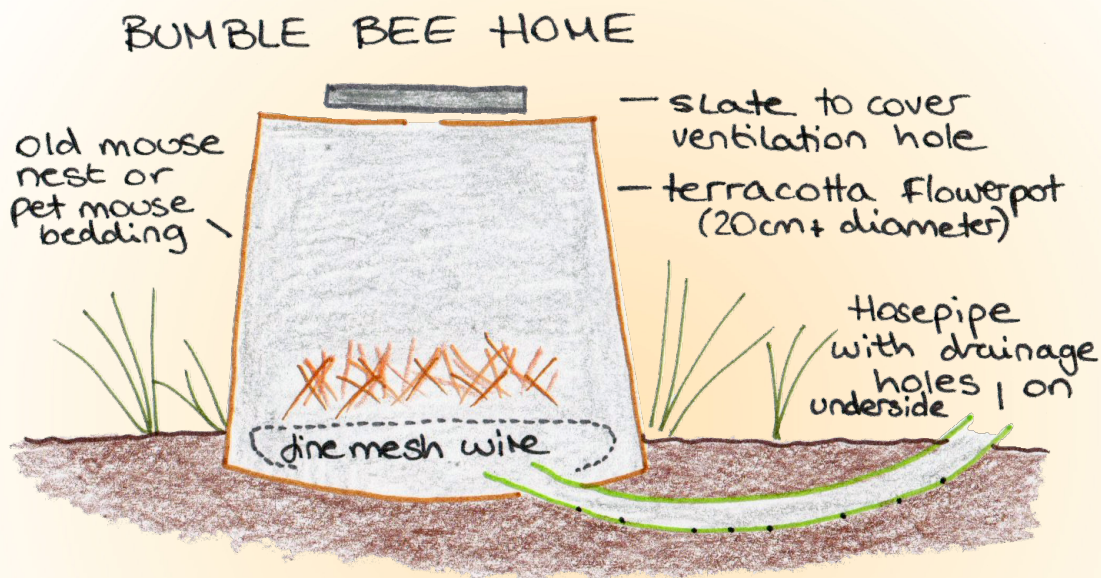
Maintenance: bee hotels should be inspected at the end of the summer, to remove and replace dead or degrading cells that can harbour mites or mould. You can protect overwintering inhabitants from wet weather by bringing into a cool, dry shed or car port, and putting them back outside in March.



For more information check out How to Make and Manage a Bee Hotel: Instructions that Really Work: www.foxleas.com/make-a-bee-hotel.asp

Homes for bumblebees

Bumblebees nest underground, often in an old mouse hole, and mostly in dry, shady areas. Many shop-bought homes do not work, partly because bumblebees seek out the smell of mouse urine. This design from the bumblebee conservation trust is worth a go, and recommends using an old mouse nest inside! <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/bumblebee-nests/>



Habitat for mining bees

These ground-nesting solitary bees prefer a sandy soil and a sunny site. If you have these conditions, keep an area of short grass, or part of a flowerbed free from mulch or ground-cover plants. The no-dig method is vital as the nests, along with overwintering larvae, are in the ground. If you don't have a sandy soil, you can create a mound in the sun that could attract bees, clipping vegetation on the sunny side, and heavy clay soil, if kept bare, can provide material for mason bees to seal their nest tubes.

Honey bees

If you would like to make a low maintenance, natural habitat for honey bees, which emulates a hollow tree, and you're not in it 'for the honey' but for the health of the bees, do consider a Bee Kind log hive. These hives are safer than those at ground level, too, as you cannot walk past the entrance. More information can be found on <https://beekindhives.uk/the-log-hive/>.



Wildflowers

How to create a wildflower border

Firstly, find an area of your garden in which you can create a new flower border. Either dig up the turf or remove weeds and unwanted plants from an existing flowerbed to show bare soil. You may have a seed selection containing a mixture of annuals, biannuals and perennials to suit different situations (such as those listed below). Is your flowerbed more in the sun or shade? Is it for a wet area or bog garden? Do you have a heavy, clay soil? Or would you like to focus on growing edible plants and herbs? Bear in mind that wildflowers tend to self-seed and are quite vigorous, so can swamp some delicate garden plants.

The mixes have been chosen by Transition Town Wellington for their beauty and wildlife value, with any invasive plants avoided.

Sun:

This mix contains viper's bugloss, white campion, scentless mayweed, dark mullein, common mallow, musk mallow, pink everlasting sweet pea, St. John's wort, hedge cranesbill, wild carrot and giant/great mullein.

Shade:

This mix contains foxgloves, red campion, aquilegia, Welsh poppy, wood cranesbill, lady's mantle, upright hedge parsley and wild garlic.

Herbs:

This mix contains salad burnet, borage, bladder campion, chicory, salsify, oregano, clary sage, common sorrel, chives and dill.

Heavy clay:

This mix contains betony, common knapweed, meadowsweet, meadow cranesbill, great burnet, pepper saxifrage, ragged robin, field scabious, wild red clover and tufted vetch.

Bog garden:

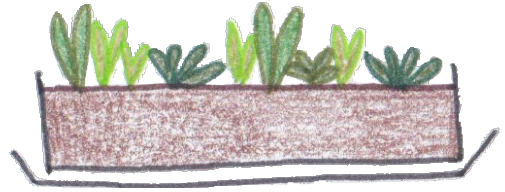
This mix contains marsh mallow, purple loosestrife, ragged robin, great burnet, sneezewort, marsh marigold, water avens, common fleabane, tufted vetch and wild angelica.

Annual flowers:

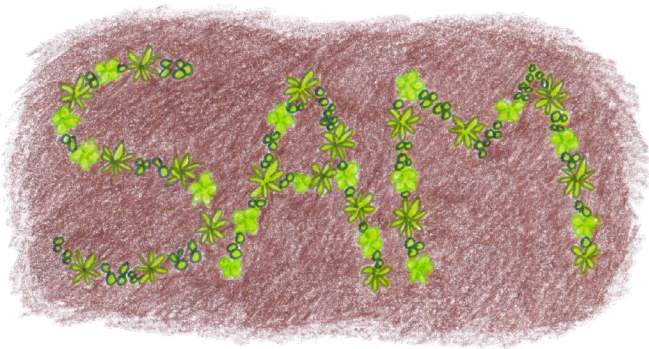
This mix contains cornflower, corn camomile, corn marigold, corncockle, corn poppy, opium poppy, wild mustard, field pansy, night-flowering catch fly, scented mayweed and field forget-me-not.

You can sow seed in spring or September, in two ways:

1. Empty your seed packet into a bowl. You can see there are lots of seeds of different shapes and sizes. Fill a seed tray with compost, and pat down. Sprinkle a pinch or two of seed on the surface, trying to make sure you sow a bit of each type. Then sprinkle a thin layer of compost on top, and soak the tray by placing in a larger shallow tray of water. Remove from soaking and place on a window sill or in an outhouse/greenhouse in the light. Water if the compost dries out. Once the seedlings sprout and start to look overcrowded, carefully transplant the larger seedlings to a second tray, or pot of compost, to give them room to grow. This will give you some 'back up' plants for your border if your seeds in the ground have patchy germination. Full guidance along with pictures is available on the TTW facebook page.



2. At the same time as you sow your tray of seeds, you can use the rest straight in the garden. Each packet is enough for 2 square metres. Rake the bare soil and, using your finger, write either lines, circles, crosses or letters in the soil. This can be your name, but make sure it's obvious and you remember what you did. Using a jug or empty milk bottle water the grooves you have made in the soil. Then sprinkle pinches of the mixed seed, thinly, along the grooves. Grab a chunk of soil and crumble it over the seed, then pat it down. Place



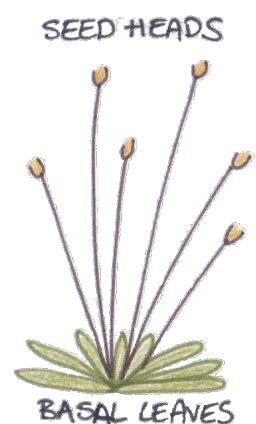
an old net curtain or horticultural fleece over the soil and weigh it down at the corners. This keeps off cats and helps germination.

If the weather is dry, water gently with a watering can once a week. In 2-3 weeks, you should see seedlings pop up in the patterns you made. This helps show what is a seedling you want to keep, and what is a weed. Remove anything growing outside your patterns.

Once the seedlings are covering enough soil that they can withstand cats, you can remove the net curtain. If you have patchy germination, plant any spare plants from your pots in the gaps, or you can move some around if too many come up in one place.

In the first season you may have to water if it is really dry, but after that, they will need minimal maintenance. Save seed that has dried in the summer, to give away or sprinkle on your soil next spring.

Leave seedheads and dead stems in place, over the winter. Remove these in the spring, using shears or secateurs, leaving the basal leaves in place, and place your cuttings in an open compost bin.



How to create a wildflower meadow

Making your lawn more valuable to wildlife doesn't necessarily mean you can't keep it mown and use it as a social space as well. Just cut down the frequency that you mow to once a month, allowing short growing flowers to open. However, more varied species will grow if you can dedicate part of your lawn to a long meadow, mowing just once or twice a year. Either way, to encourage wildflowers in an existing lawn, make sure you remove the grass cuttings every time you mow. This reduces the fertility and vigour of the grass, giving wildflowers a better chance. Do not use lawn 'feed and weed' products. Dandelions and clovers are some of the best flowers for bees.

Meadow wildflower seed should be sown in September. We recommend sowing 100% wildflower seed into existing grass, at 1.5 grams per square meter, for which these species are particularly good: common knapweed, wild carrot, yellow rattle, white campion and red campion, yarrow, lady's bedstraw, rough hawkbit, oxeye daisy, ribwort plantain, cowslip, self heal, meadow buttercup, common sorrel, wild red clover and salad burnet. Those underlined will survive mowing once a month.



To sow your wildflower seed, first mow the lawn as short as your mower goes. Then either rake with a grass rake or borrow a scarifier. Remove as much thatch and moss as you can, then mow again.



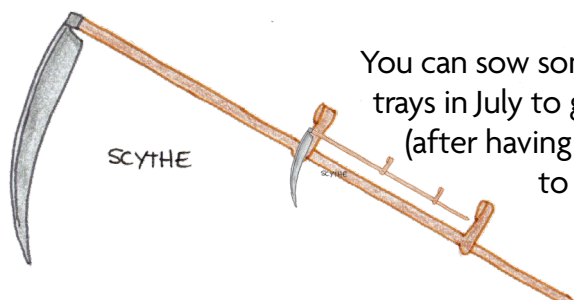
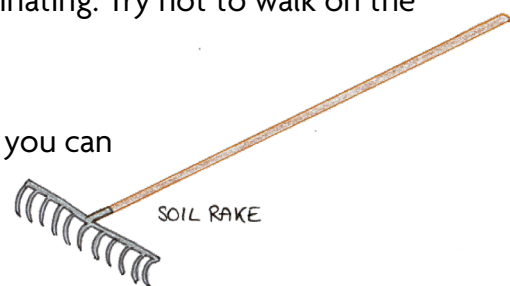
Using a soil rake this time, or a harsher setting on the scarifier, rough up the surface of your soil as much as you can — ripping up the grass at this stage is fine. Then mow again.

You will now have patches of soil showing, which is a perfect seed bed. The grass will grow back, just hopefully weakened.

Scatter sow your mixed seed very thinly. Best to put less down and have to go back over than to run out.

Then shuffle-walk up and down over the area to press the seed in. That's all you need to do now but wait and see if you can spot seed germinating. Try not to walk on the lawn during the first winter.

Cutting long grass is impossible with a lawn mower, so you can either use a strimmer or scythe. To train to use a scythe or hire someone to do it for you, contact Somerset Scythe School, based here in Wellington, on 07581239453 or <https://somenscyschool.com/>



You can sow some of your meadow wildflower seed in seed or module trays in July to grow plug plants for planting in your lawn in September (after having sowed and stamped in your seed). This will give a back-up to guarantee success in case of patchy germination.



Frome Wild Bunch is open to anyone who is interested in gardening and activities to support wildlife.



We champion the idea of our private gardens and shared local green spaces being interconnected parts of a much larger space that is owned by our wild neighbours.



The group shares ideas, hosts monthly gatherings and holds public events that promote wildlife-friendly approaches in our neighbourhoods.



Wild Bunch gatherings happen on the third Thursday of each month with an option to join online (if we're not out in the wild).



frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wild-bunch



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