



garden for life

Garden for bugs

And you'll never be short of visitors

Gardening for bugs

Providing food and shelter for invertebrates has never been more important and gardens are perfect places to do this. Our gardens often support a variety of habitats that form an important network across the UK. Today, many of our gardens act as a refuge for a whole host of wildlife. Gardening with wildlife in mind is one way that everyone can do their bit for wildlife conservation.

This flyer has information on how you can manage your garden for bugs!

Plant native wildflowers

It is a well known fact that many of our pollinating insects are in decline. By planting native wildflowers into your garden you will be providing a more natural food source for a variety of pollinating insects and will attract other beneficial bugs, e.g. ladybirds and lacewings that will feed on aphids and other insect pests of garden plants.

When creating a wildflower area:

- Plant wildflowers either as seed or as 'plug' plants directly into a flower bed or if you have limited space into a container (any size or design of container can be used as long as it has drainage holes in the bottom and remember to use peat-free compost).
- Plant wildflowers in an area where they will get plenty of sun. If your garden is shaded, there are plenty of shade tolerant species such as Foxglove and Red campion.
- Wildflower seeds can be sown in spring or autumn. Please note that some wildflower seeds need a frost to break their dormancy. Follow instructions on your seed packet when sowing seed.
- When choosing your seed, make sure wildflowers are native to the UK as these provide the best benefits to our pollinators and other bugs.
- Why not plant herbs including Rosemary and Lavender that are also very good for pollinators and can be used for cooking.
- If your wildflower area looks crowded, thin out some of the plants.
- Cut back the plants at the end of autumn and remove the cuttings. This will benefit the wildflowers the following year.
- Enjoy!



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Both photos above credit: Suzanne Burgess

Make a bee or bug hotel!

Solitary bee hotel

Bees are hugely important pollinators. The majority of bees in the UK are 'solitary' and don't live in big social hives like honey bees and bumblebees. Many of our solitary bees nest in hollow plant stems or holes in wood. To make a solitary bee hotel you will need: hollow plant stems or bamboo canes (1.5-2cm in width), string, and a saw or knife. To make the hotel:

- Cut hollow plant stems and/or bamboo into 10-20cm long sections with a saw or knife (please take care when cutting).
- Tie bundles of about 15-20 sections together with garden twine or string.
- Hang the bee hotel in a sunny but sheltered place about five feet above the ground— the side of a shed or on a trellis is ideal!

Other materials can be used to make your bee hotel. Why not drill different sized small holes (between 2-6 mm in diameter) into a piece of wood. These can be placed alongside the bamboo canes or hollow plant stems to create a really interesting home for bees and other bugs. There are lots of different designs to look at for ideas on the internet.

Bug hotel for spiders, beetles and more

In autumn and winter as the nights start getting colder, invertebrates such as spiders, beetles and snails need a safe and dry place to shelter and hibernate. A bug hotel is an ideal way to provide this! To make a bug hotel you will need plastic mesh (or chicken wire) about 1m by 1m, string (or wire), a flat piece of wood or plastic, sticks, dead leaves, and a wire coat hanger.

- Curl mesh or chicken wire into a tube and tie it in place with string or wire.
- Put some sticks through the bottom of the mesh tube to provide an off the ground base to stop the hotel getting damp.
- Fill the tube with dead leaves and give the bug hotel a lid to make it water tight, by placing a flat piece of wood or plastic over the top.
- Add more leaves over time as the old leaves dry out and shrink down.
- Place the bug hotel in a quiet corner of the garden, preferably where it gets some shade.
- To secure the bug hotel from high winds you may wish to open a wire coat hanger to create a v-shaped peg in the ground.

Other wildlife gardening tips:

Invertebrates really like heaps of dead wood and leaves lying around the place, this can be a source of food for some species and habitats for others.

Compost heaps will also attract woodlice, millipedes and slugs all of which are essential for breaking down organic and garden refuse.

Remember to monitor your bug homes and wildflowers for the bugs that use them and record your findings through iRecord.

There is more information on gardening for invertebrates on the Buglife website: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/gardening-for-bugs/>



Photo credit (top-bottom): Freya Knopp; Buglife; Magne Flaten;