

Wildlife Gardening: Urban Gardens

The loss of natural habitat in the wider countryside due to factors such as development, has led to the fragmentation of suitable areas for wildlife to live, feed and breed in. Urban areas and gardens have therefore become a much needed resource for wildlife, and represent the mosaic of habitats required by different species.

Even the smallest garden can still be a rich haven for wildlife. If you don't have a lot of space, here are some suggestions for making the most of the space you have:

Wildflowers in containers, tubs & window boxes

Containers can be used for planting nectar-rich plants and herbs to attract many insects, including butterflies and bees. Flowers should be planted in a sheltered, sunny position to encourage insects to visit. Try to include plants that flower at different times throughout the year as in spring high-nectar flowers are important for early emerging insects and in autumn nectar rich plants will help insects preparing for hibernation. Early nectar plants include primrose, sweet violet and aubretia; mid-season nectar plants include valerian, lavender and verbena; and for autumn try honeysuckle, ivy and michaelmas daisies. If possible, try to include plants such as evening primrose and night scented stock to provide evening nectar for moths and other insects that feed at night. Herbs such as mint, rosemary and thyme are also attractive to a wide range of insects.



Containers are available in all shapes and sizes so you can mix and match to fit the space that you have. You will need to make sure that containers are frost-proof and have drainage holes. Line the bottom of the container with a material which will allow water to drain away from the compost. Depending on the size of the container you can use broken pottery, bits of old brick, gravel, pebbles and even polystyrene.

Please do NOT use peat compost as extraction of the peat has led to the destruction of the natural peat habitats. There are many excellent commercially produced alternatives available, including 'pro-grow' made from garden waste taken to household waste centres.



Vertical surfaces

Make the most of bare walls and fences by attaching a trellis and growing climbers such as honeysuckle, clematis or ivy. If there is no soil near to the wall or fence, climbers can be grown successfully in containers.

Create a wildlife pond

One of the best ways of encouraging wildlife is to build a pond but it doesn't need to be large to be effective. Even an old sink can support newts or frogs at spawning time as long as it is placed thoughtfully.

Attract the birds

Installing a bird feeder or bird table will encourage birds to visit your garden. Both appeal to a range of garden birds but some food should also be scattered on the ground for birds such as blackbirds and thrushes which are reluctant to use bird tables. A wide range of supplementary food is available at garden centres and pet shops and you can also buy feeders that fix onto a window if you don't have space to hang one.. If you have room, putting up a nest box may also encourage birds to nest in your garden. Bird boxes with an entry hole of 3cm diameter will be used by tits and tree sparrows; a larger hole of 5cm will allow access to house sparrows and starlings.

Green your roof

You can create a living roof - one that has been intentionally covered in vegetation - on sheds, porches, outhouses, balconies, garages and small extensions. Contact the Trust if you would like further information.

And finally ...

Although by taking up any of these suggestions you are helping wildlife, the most important thing is to enjoy your garden - whether it is one square foot or half an acre!

If you would like to **find out more** about how to encourage wildlife into your garden, please see the Wildlife Gardening pages of our website at <http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening>.

If you have a question about wildlife you may find in your garden please contact **WildLine**, the Trust's free **wildlife information service** on 01489 774406 or Email: wildline@hiwwt.org.uk

