

Wildlife Gardening: Hedgehog Home

Why are hedgehog boxes important?

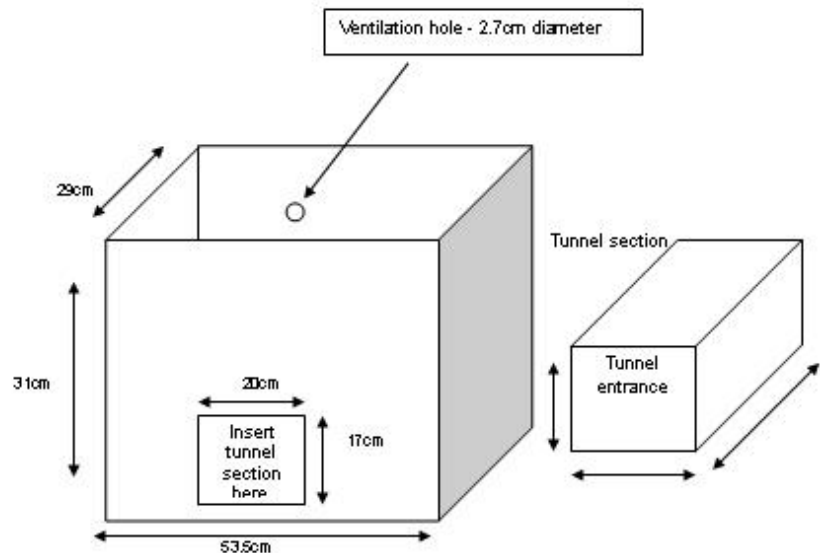
Hedgehogs avoid the coldest times of winter by hibernating, usually between November and early April. Around October they build a thick nest of leaves and grass in areas such as compost heaps, wood stacks or brushwood.

How do I make it?

The easiest and cheapest way of creating a hedgehog shelter is simply to lean an old board against a wall, fence or log etc and cover it with leaves or soil. Secure it against the wind by putting branches or logs on top. The space under the board will provide a dry shelter which a hedgehog may find suitable for hibernation. Put some leaves or dry straw at the entrance. Alternatively, a summer nesting or winter hibernation box can be constructed reasonably simply.

Design

Use either 1cm 7-ply plywood and put runners on the base of the box to prevent it coming into direct contact with the ground. Special attention must be paid to ventilation. For this purpose a plastic tube should be inserted into the rear of the box and angled slightly downwards to prevent the ingress of moisture. It is extremely important that the tube is not blocked at any time so ensure that it is of sufficient length to be clear of the insulation material that will be placed over the box.



Where should I put it?

Choose an undisturbed and sheltered part of the garden to site the box; under a hedge, large shrub or a shed is suitable. Put some shredded newspaper and dry straw inside to start the nest. Cover the box with some roofing felt or pond liner. This will keep it dry and extend its life. Finally cover the box with leaves, compost, soil or branches to provide insulation and improve the overall appearance. Ensure that both the tunnel entrance and vent are left clear. August and February.

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>.

