

Wildlife Gardening: Bat box

Why are bat boxes important?

All bat species in the U.K. are protected by law because their numbers have declined so dramatically. The decline is due to loss of feeding habitats and flight lines, loss of insects to feed on, and development affecting roosts. Bats are becoming more reliant on urban habitats, where they roost in buildings and forage in nearby wooded parks and gardens. By putting up a bat box you are helping provide a safe place for bats to roost.

What makes a bat box special?

Bat boxes have entrance holes in the bottom rather than in the front like bird boxes. Inside the box the wood is grooved to provide the bats with something to cling to.

Where should I put it?

The best place to position a bat box is on a tree. If you have more than one, place them in groups round three sides of a tree - bats like to move from one box to another during the day and from season to season as temperatures change.

Put the boxes as high as possible above the ground to avoid predators - some species of bat such as noctules prefer roosts at least 5 metres off the ground. Clear away surrounding branches to give them a clear flight path.

Boxes can also be located on buildings. A good position is under the eaves to protect them from bad weather. Bats can take a while to investigate new premises, but if your box is not occupied within three years, try moving it. You can check if the box is being used by looking for crumbly brown or black droppings on the ground.

Important: It is illegal to disturb any bat when it is roosting, or to kill, injure or handle a bat without a licence.

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

