

# Community Gardening



Dorset  
Wildlife Trust

Wildlife-friendly gardening



# COMMUNITY GARDENING

Welcome to this quick guide to planting a wildlife-friendly community garden. This leaflet will provide you with tips and ideas on how to make a garden for everyone to enjoy!



Tending to vegetables at Kingcombe Visitor Centre © Sally Welbourn



Holy Trinity School's pond © Brian King



Planting a community wildlife garden © Joy Wallis



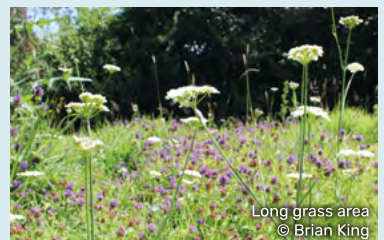
Henstridge School vegetable plot © Brian King



Compost heap © Jane Taylor



Bug house © Sue Tatman



Long grass area © Brian King

# TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

## 1 INVOLVE EVERYONE

Encourage all to get involved not just gardeners! Artists (think garden sculptures and carvings), cooks or musicians. Local schools may help with story/nature and bug trails.

## 2 TELLING THE STORY OF THE GARDEN

Spread the word via social media, talking to friends, local press/radio. Perhaps a welcome/information board, flag or garden logo?

## 3 JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

Have you thought about joining Dorset Wildlife Trust's wildlife-friendly garden scheme? Community gardens can apply and it is free. Details can be found at the end of this leaflet - take a look!

## 4 ENCOURAGING HEDGEHOGS

Provide food, shelter and water and check for hedgehogs prior to an autumn bonfire, in case they are hibernating in it!

## 5 IDEAS FOR CHILDREN

See inside for lots of ideas to keep children engaged, from willow arches to rockeries.

## 6 WALL MOUNTED BUG HOUSES

**Fix firmly:** so that it does not swing or fall down in the wind.

**Shelter from 'driving' rain:** occupants may drown if too wet.

**Height:** at least two metres off the ground.

**Variety:** try different boxes/locations to see what works in your garden.

Read on for more information on bug houses.

## 7 WATER

The life of the garden! Ponds in community gardens can be a concern for children, but it is possible to provide water for wildlife safely. Give wildlife an easy exit route from water too.

# IDEAS FOR CHILDREN

## HIBERNACULUM

Create a winter home for frogs, toads and newts. In a quiet, shady spot dig a hole (30cm deep), fill with leaves/twigs and put a paving slab on top. On one side, leave a gap/gentle slope as an 'entrance'. It is OK to have a peek inside if you are gentle and quiet.



## WILLOW ARCHES/ STORY DENS

Get long willow 'whips' (live stems more than 6m) and they'll grow when placed in the ground; you can create an arch, tunnel, den or story circle.



## HOVERFLY LAGOON

To encourage these important pollinators, in early spring, fill a plastic container with grass cuttings and rain-water. Leave undisturbed in long grass. Be warned the water may become smelly but this will attract hoverflies to lay eggs in the lagoon! The harmless, aquatic, rat-tailed maggots will pupate into beautiful adult hoverflies!



## STONES/ROCKERY

Ideal for reptiles to bask on and live in between the rocks. Build in a sunny spot with dry/gritty soil, use different shapes, sizes, and types of rock. Plant with grasses and/or spreading alpine herbs.



## STUMPERY

Perfect for a kids nature trail!  
Half bury a mix of different logs in to the ground (with at least 30cm into the ground). This will encourage lots of bugs e.g. beetles, millipedes, earwigs and stag beetles. Under some logs, add a tube protruding out to make a tunnel - creating a nest site for solitary ground nesting or mining bees.

# WATER

## SHALLOW WATER

This provides water for mammals to drink and birds to bathe. Sink a shallow plant-pot tray, old dish, or dustbin lid into the ground.

## PLANTS

Use plants to keep your pond healthy – water mint is quick growing, attracts pollinators and only needs shallow water.



Water mint  
© Philip Precey



Easy egress into pond  
© Tom Marshall

## EASY ACCESS

Always put a stone or wood in the water to enable wildlife to climb out!



Pond planting  
© Katie Wilkinson

## BUCKETS AND SINKS

You don't need a big pond to attract wildlife. There are many other solutions including old kitchen sinks, troughs, or simply a bucket of water with bog plants in. It doesn't have to be big to be useful!



Pond in a bucket  
© Katie Wilkinson



Easy egress  
© Katie Wilkinson

## RAISED POND

Construct a sturdy raised plinth with brick/wood: Recess a large shallow saucer on top, more than 1 metre high, so toddlers can see the water but not fall in it.



Raised pond  
© Hilary Larcombe

# ENCOURAGING WILDLIFE

## BUG BOXES - SOLITARY BEES

For solitary bees, ensure tubes are 2-10mm diameter/16-18cm long with no foliage obscuring flight entrance.

Mason bees like full sun on walls (south), other solitary bees (e.g. leaf cutter or wood-carder bees) don't like direct sun so east/south-east is best, and not on brick (as this gets hot).



Bug house  
© Katie Wilkinson



Insect hotel  
© Jane Taylor

## BUG BOXES - WINGED INSECTS

Other winged creatures (ladybirds, lacewings etc) prefer shady spots with vegetation cover which are safe from predators; they're not so fussy about the dimensions of crevices, so these can be filled with various sticks/canes and/or filled with wood chip, bark, straw etc.



Bug houses  
© Brian King



Log pile  
© Brian King

## HEDGEHOG HOMES

A big pile of leaves and twigs in a quiet, shady spot (behind a tree or against a wall or fence) provides the ideal home. If buying a hedgehog home - get one made with natural, untreated materials or make your own!



Hedgehog  
© Peter Crossman

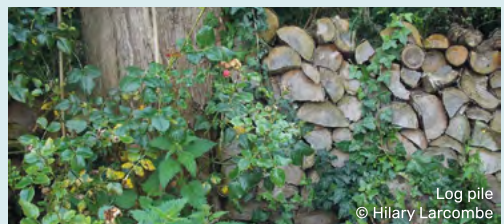


Hedgehog  
© Richard Burkmar

## HEDGEHOG FOOD

Build a log pile of different types of wood to attract various insects, a rich food source for hedgehogs.

To get logs - try a local tree surgeon or come to a Dorset Wildlife Trust volunteer work party and collect wood there!



Log pile  
© Hilary Larcombe

# MAINTENANCE

## LIQUID PLANT FEED

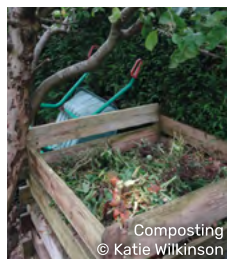
Create your own liquid feed on tap by making a water butt 'plant feed' factory:

Pack nettles and/or comfrey into a pair of nylon tights. Tie these inside the lid of a full water butt for about 6-8 weeks (they hang down in the water as they rot), to create liquid feed on tap! Dilute to use (about 1 mug per watering can).



## COMPOSTING

Your garden's power house! The best compost is a 3 box system: one of fresh cut material, one rotting down (covered), and one for harvesting; ideally add horse manure too, this nitrogen-rich resource once rotted down will encourage lots of beneficial insects as well as hugely improve soil structure. A healthy soil makes healthy plants.



## GRASS MANAGEMENT

Do you need to mow all the grass throughout the summer? Reducing mowing, and changing mowing height all helps. Create annual zones for example:

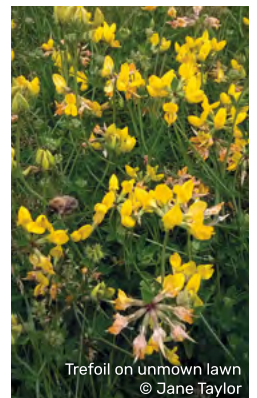
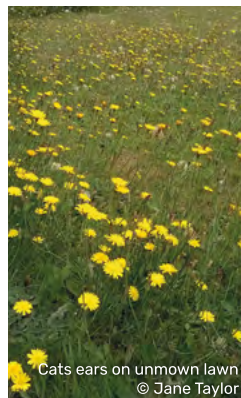
**No-mow-zone** - no mowing all year

**Sixes-and-sevens-zone** - mow 6 - 7 times

**Meadow zone** - mow spring and late summer

Be consistent each year and different wild plants will establish in different zones.

Take care with power strimmers they can be harmful e.g. hedgehogs or toads dozing in a grass tussock.



## DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST

Our vision is to create a 'Wilder Dorset', rich in wildlife, valued and nurtured by everyone. By 2030, we want to see 30% of land and sea managed for the benefits of nature and we want to help more people take action for nature. A 'Wilder Dorset' will safeguard our natural world for future generations and enable people to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.

With the support of our 27,000 members, our volunteers, supporters, and partners, we champion wildlife and natural places on our 40 nature reserves and work to deliver nature's recovery throughout Dorset.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

[hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org)  
[wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)  
[farmgarden.org.uk](http://farmgarden.org.uk)  
[growwilduk.com](http://growwilduk.com)  
[meadows.plantlife.org.uk](http://meadows.plantlife.org.uk)

## take ACTION

#WilderDorset

There are lots of ways to encourage wildlife in your garden. Plant flowers to attract pollinators, make a hedgehog doorway in your fence or simply create different habitats such as hedges, flowering trees or long grass. Large or small, your garden will be a stepping stone, helping wildlife to travel from place to place, to breed, feed and shelter.



Make space for nature in your green space and apply for your wildlife-friendly plaque. Visit [dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme](http://dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme) to find out how to qualify.

## Our thanks to The Gardens Group for sponsoring this leaflet



The Gardens Group is made up of three garden centres, each as unique as the plants within them,

located in Sherborne (Castle Gardens), Yeovil (Brimsmore Gardens) and Poundbury (Poundbury Gardens).

United by a commitment to green spaces and the wider community, The Gardens Group's team of experts includes

indoor and outdoor plant enthusiasts, lepidopterists and wildlife warriors, all ready to inspire, educate and engage with gardeners of all ages and levels of expertise.

The garden centres are also home to three award-winning restaurants and a farm shop, built on people and place, as well as The Gardens Group's hugely popular and multi award-winning Christmas displays.

To find out more, go to [www.thegardensgroup.co.uk](http://www.thegardensgroup.co.uk).