

Birds and Bushes



Dorset
Wildlife Trust

Wildlife-friendly gardening



BIRDS AND BUSHES

Birds are some of the easiest wildlife to spot in your garden. This leaflet gives tips on how to attract them and on the shrubs or hedging plants that will attract most wildlife plus offer you year-round colour. Over 1,500 species of native plants grow in the UK. If you grow just a few, you'll be helping the wildlife that depends on them.



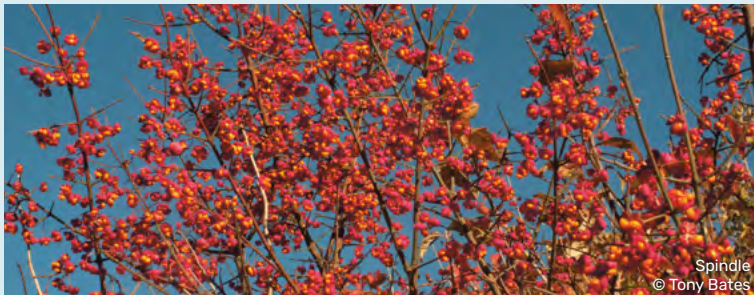
Robin
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Chiffchaff
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Bramble berries
© Ken Dolbear MBE



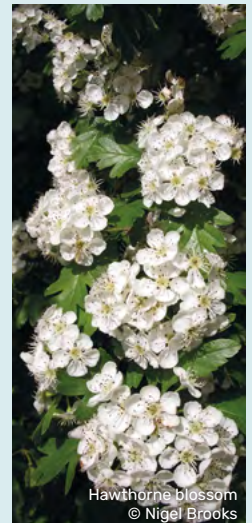
Spindle
© Tony Bates



Dog rose hips
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Brambling
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Hawthorne blossom
© Nigel Brooks

TOP TIPS FOR BIRDS AND BUSHES

1 FEED BIRDS SEASONALLY

If you only do one thing for wildlife in your garden, feed the birds through the winter months. Birds, like people, have preferences for different foods - read on for tips. Good hygiene around feeders and water bowls is vital or you may do more harm than good.

2 PROVIDE WATER

Provide clean drinking and bathing water all year round - just a shallow saucer is enough if you don't have space for big features. Make sure you keep it very clean to prevent diseases.

3 CAT COLLARS

If you own a cat, you can reduce the number of birds and small mammals your cat kills by treating it to a correctly fitted, quick-release collar mounted with bells.

4 THE RIGHT SHRUB

Think berry, nut and seed producing plants when you think about shrubs. These can be a crucial source of food for birds and small mammals in winter. Read on for a list of attractive, productive shrubs.

5 NATIVE SHRUBS

As a rule, choose native species of shrubs. The insects in this country have evolved to live on them so you will be providing more food for birds and mammals.

6 PLANT A NATIVE HEDGE

Hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn, spindle, guelder rose or hornbeam will give a superb wildlife-friendly hedge full of blossom and fruits. If you already have a hedge then cut it back in winter only - an 'A' shape is best.

7 LEARN

Come and help on a Dorset Wildlife Trust nature reserve and learn how to lay a hedge and other management techniques.

BIRDS

HIGH FAT FOODS

Birds need high fat foods during the winter months to ensure they can survive the cold nights. Between 1 November and 30 April, put out good quality peanuts, sunflower seeds, fat balls and seed mixes. Never put out loose peanuts. Avoid overfeeding and clean feeders weekly.



FEED SEASONALLY

Research has found that the highest risk of spreading disease is between 1 May and 31 October. You should avoid offering seeds and peanuts and only offer small amounts of suet, fat balls or mealworms in moderation.

FEEDERS

Avoid the use of flat feeders and stick to hanging feeders to avoid disease transmission. If you have a bird bath, change the water daily.



BIRD BOXES

Encourage birds to nest in your garden by putting up boxes made from untreated timber or 'woodcrete'. Place them out of direct sunlight and facing away from the prevailing wind. They should be at least two metres above the ground. Different birds choose different types of boxes so check out the range at a local garden centre.



BATS

Don't forget the bats. It's best to put up several bat boxes to give them a choice of places to roost.



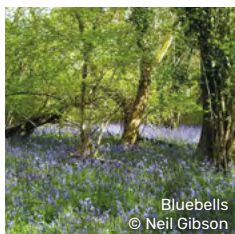
HEDGES AND TREES

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEDGES

Hedgerows are vital corridors for animals to move from one place to another. They offer shelter and food and can be planted even in small spaces. Consider planting a native hedge along your boundary instead of installing a fence or wall. Hundreds of plants can be found along established hedgerows that have been managed in a traditional way.

NATIVE HEDGES

If you have space for a hedge, plant a mixed native hedge including hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn, spindle, guelder rose, hornbeam, field maple. You could also add in fruit trees or bushes such as apple, plum and currant.



CLIMBERS

Allow scrambling roses, native honeysuckle, wild clematis, hop and ivy to grow through the hedge. This adds visual and wildlife interest. Ivy is a late nectar source for many insects and offers berries when most others have been eaten.

HEDGEROW PLANTS

Beneath your hedge, the ground is often bare as few plants will grow in such a shady environment - a perfect opportunity to add hedgerow plants such as native bluebell, lords and ladies, betony, primrose, stitchwort, campion, dog violet, garlic mustard and many more.



NATIVE TREES

If you don't have any trees, consider where you may be able to introduce at least one but be aware that roots can affect your buildings. Good native trees for planting near houses are birch, crab apple, hawthorn and rowan. Minimum distance is roughly eight to ten metres away from the house. Native trees have up to 200 associated insect species.

WOODLAND EDGE HABITAT

Most of us don't have a big enough garden to develop a woodland. However if you have space, you can create a woodland edge habitat. All you need is enough space for a hedge or a couple of small trees. This habitat is incredibly rich in wildlife as it forms a transition zone between a shady woodland and a sunny field.

SHRUBS AND FRUIT

FRUIT TREES

A whole range of fruit trees can be grown in a small garden including dwarf varieties suitable for pots. Always buy fruit trees from a good nursery or garden centre - cheaper trees are not a bargain.



Apple tree
© Tony Bates

SHRUBS AND BERRIES

Choose species that produce berries during winter for the birds to feed on. Any of the native hedge species are good stand alone shrubs plus holly, shrub roses such as sweet briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*), ivy or honeysuckle (both are climbers) or rowan tree.



Elderberries
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Common hazel nut
© Ken Dolbear MBE

FRUIT BUSHES

Don't forget soft fruit bushes. Blueberries are particularly easy to grow in a pot and need very little maintenance. Raspberries and currants are also enjoyed by birds and humans alike.



Guelder rose
© Joy Wallis

MISTLETOE

If you can encourage mistletoe to grow in any of your shrubs or trees, especially apple, this is great food for blackbirds.



Blackbird
© Ken Dolbear MBE

COLD WEATHER FOOD

Pyracantha, berberis, viburnum and elder are also among the good food sources that will support your birds when the weather turns icy.

NATURAL FOOD FOR BIRDS

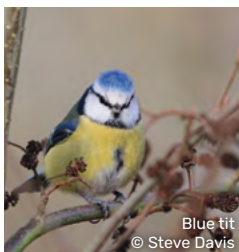
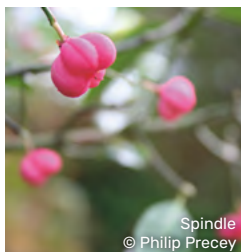
Artificial nest sites and food sources form important habitat supplements for wild birds, but gardens can be managed to provide these more naturally.



NATIVE PLANTS

Wild birds need wild plants as they produce a steady supply of food, caterpillars and other insects. Exotic species support fewer insects and so fewer birds.

Grow as many native plants as you can (though many exotic flowers provide very good sources of nectar for bees and butterflies). Cut out chemical sprays and let the birds do the pest control for you.

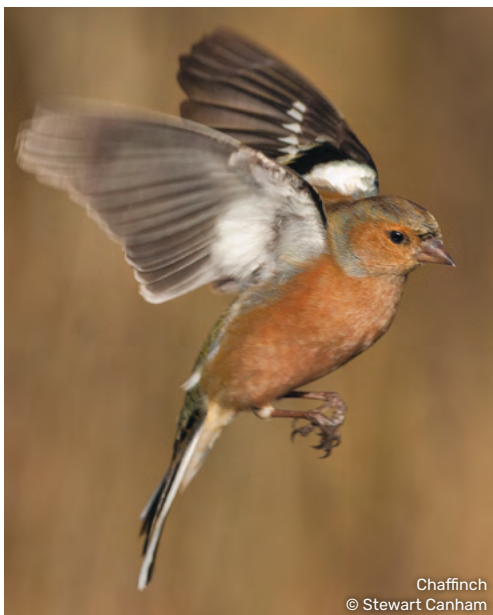


BUSH FOOD

Grow seed, berry and nut bushes: berberis, pyracantha, guelder rose, crab apple, hawthorn and female holly are all bird favourites.

BE UNTIDY

Tolerate some untidiness and leave things to die back naturally. Leave windfall fruit on the ground, leave seed heads on flowers and allow leaves to rot down. The birds will be truly grateful.



ATTRACT SPECIFIC BIRDS

To attract specific birds:

- Plant teasels for goldfinches
- Cut the heads off sunflowers as they ripen and hang them - for tits and finches
- Plant crocuses and honesty for chaffinches and bullfinches

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 space plaque.

Visit dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme to find out how to qualify.

DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST

Our mission is to create a wilder Dorset for people and wildlife. With the support of our 27,000 members, Dorset Wildlife Trust manages 42 nature reserves and four visitor centres. We look after Dorset's wildlife and wild places, restore habitats to make space for nature and inspire people to explore, enjoy and value the natural world.

Join us now to help protect Dorset's wildlife and wild places and make a real difference.



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.



Nature Recovery Dorset is a movement to make more, bigger, better and connected spaces for nature across Dorset. It has been collectively created to allow everyone in the county to join up to help nature recover.

Visit dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery to find out how to get involved.