

# Gardener's friends



**Dorset**  
Wildlife Trust

**Wildlife-friendly gardening**



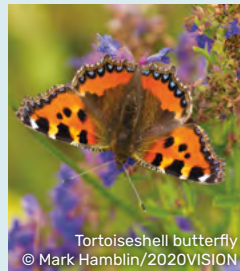
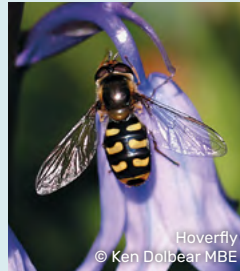
# HELP YOUR GARDEN GROW

Every creature has a role in making our gardens grow. By working with nature, we can create a healthy balance.

## PREDATORS - TO CONTROL NUMBER OF 'PESTS'



## POLLINATORS FOR FRUIT, NUTS AND SEEDS



## RECYCLERS - TO BREAK DOWN WASTE AND RELEASE NUTRIENTS



# TOP TIPS FOR A THRIVING GARDEN

## 1 ENCOURAGE NATURE

Provide food and homes for wildlife to help bring a balance to the garden and prevent the need for chemicals.

## 2 PRACTISE TOLERANCE

Try to tolerate a small amount of 'pests' and 'weeds'. If you blitz the 'pests', you will lose all the beneficial creatures too. They all have a place in the food chain!

## 3 FEED THE SOIL

Feed the soil, not the plants! A well-structured soil fed with organic matter produces healthy, disease resistant plants, reducing the need to resort to chemical controls. Chemical fertilisers can damage important organisms that work for you in the soil. Chemicals can also stimulate rapid plant growth which is 'tasty' and attractive to 'pests'.

## 4 MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST OR LEAF MOULD

Peat gives structure but no nutrients; fertiliser gives nutrients but no structure. Homemade compost gives both and IT'S FREE. Whole ecosystems have disappeared due to peat extraction so choose peat-free compost. See inside for other peat alternatives.

## 5 GO CHEMICAL-FREE

Think carefully about your use of chemicals. Herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers can have negative effects in your garden. Let plants grow naturally and, over time, allow your garden to strike a balance. Remember a 'pest' or 'weed' to you is a food source for wildlife.

## 6 CROP ROTATION

Even in a small space, crop rotation will help to avoid a build-up of 'pests' and diseases. Mix flowers in with your veg, especially if there is not enough space to carry out full crop rotation.

# HELP YOUR GARDEN GROW

## COMPANION PLANTING

Some plants produce substances which repel 'pests', others attract natural predators, and some can be sacrificed to lure 'pests', away! For example:

- Tomatoes like basil, chives and rosemary
- Garlic and chives under roses help to keep aphids and black spot away
- Nasturtiums will attract aphids away from your vegetables
- Spring onions can deter carrot root fly



## BATS

Bats eat up to 3,500 insects a night, including fruit tree 'pests' such as codling moth. Night-scented stock, tobacco plant, ivy and honeysuckle will attract moths and bugs they like to eat.

## APHID EATERS

Lacewings, ladybirds and hoverflies will munch huge numbers of aphids. Hoverfly larvae can eat 50 aphids a day and many live in rotting wood or stagnant pools! Attract adults by planting Michaelmas daisy, phacelia, sedum, teasel and scabious.

## WASPS

Wasps aren't all bad - they feed their grubs on caterpillars, flies and other insects. By the end of the summer, a nest may have consumed 250,000 insects.



## SLUG AND SNAIL CONTROLLERS

Frogs, toads, shrews, hedgehogs, ground beetles, centipedes and rove beetles will use a log pile as a home and keep your slugs and snails under control, as do song thrushes. Remember not all slugs and snails eat garden plants!

## NETTLES AND COMFREY

Both of these can be turned into free liquid fertilizer. Chop up the plants, half fill a bucket and cover with water. After two or three weeks it will be ready - and very smelly - so keep it outside. Dilute about 1:5 with water. Or put the cut-up plants into a pair of old tights and place in your waterbutt. It will then act like a teabag and infuse the water with natural fertiliser.

## WEEDS

Weeds are just wild flowers in the 'wrong' place. Dandelions for example are an important source of nectar for bees in spring when they need energy after hibernation.

# NATURAL CONTROLS

There are many environmentally friendly alternatives to chemical sprays. Here are some tips on how to get the balance right.

## APHIDS

- Nasturtiums will attract aphids away from your vegetables.
- Encourage natural predators such as small birds, ladybirds, hoverflies, lacewings
- Encourage small birds
- If all else fails either 'squish' them or spray a mild solution of an environmentally friendly washing up liquid BUT DO NOT DO THIS if ladybirds or other predators are present.



Aphids © Ken Dolbear MBE

## SCALE INSECTS

Control with scale nematodes or wipe with alcohol or dilute detergent.

## VINE WEEVIL

Apply nematode biological controls when the larvae are active in spring.

## EELWORMS

Marigold roots emit a chemical which repels the potato root eelworm.



Cabbage white caterpillar © Vaughn Matthews

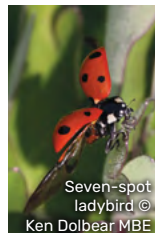
## CATERPILLARS

- Pick off off cabbage whites by hand
- Plant sage, mints, catnip, onions, garlic, marigolds or strongly scented plants next to your crop
- Encourage ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies
- Protect crops with fine mesh in spring
- Remember, not all caterpillars defoliate plants. If you tolerate a few holes, your garden will be full of beautiful butterflies and moths later in the year.

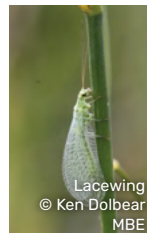
## STRIKE A BALANCE

By its very nature, a wildlife-friendly garden will attract a diverse array of wildlife, including animals perceived by humans to be 'pests'. Encouraging natural predator-prey relationships will help your garden achieve a natural balance.

Nurturing strong healthy plants will allow them to survive the impact of being 'nibbled'.



Seven-spot ladybird © Ken Dolbear MBE



Lacewing © Ken Dolbear MBE



Bee on marigold © Ken Dolbear MBE

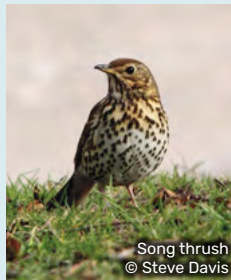
# SLUGS AND SNAILS - THE FACTS

There are 44 species of slug and 120 species of snail in the UK but only a small number cause damage to garden plants. Others only eat decaying matter and some even eat other slugs and snails. White lipped banded snails prefer to eat nettles, ragwort and hogweed. With so much of our wildlife declining, now is the time to become more tolerant - a 'pest' to you could be food for beetles, hedgehogs and song thrushes.

## BARRIERS

Some gardeners report success with the following:

- Thick layer of eggshells – check and repair any breaches in your defence barrier
- Cloches or re-used plastic bottles
- Wool fibre pellets
- Hair
- Copper strips around plants



## SONG THRUSHES

Song thrushes will eat vast numbers of snails.

- Place a flat stone in your flower borders or vegetable patch for them to bash snails on.



## CONTROL MEASURES

- Grow plants that are less desirable to slugs and snails: aquilegia, foxglove, eryngium species, geranium species, geum, phlox, pulmonaria, rudbeckia, scabiosa, sedum, stachys
- Plant sacrificial plants like lettuce that slugs will enjoy
- Protect small plants with bottles/cloches
- Encourage slug predators - hedgehogs, slow worms, beetles and centipedes all feed on slugs, so encourage these into your garden by creating log or stone piles, compost heaps, piles of leaves, and gaps in fences.
- Rake over your soil - the exposed slugs will get eaten by natural predators
- Beer traps will attract slugs and snail to a sticky but 'happy' end – remember to leave the lip of the trap above the soil surface to prevent ground beetles accidentally tumbling in
- NEVER use chemical slug pellets as this will not only kill slugs and snails but also lots of the helpful wildlife which feed on them including blackbirds, hedgehogs, song thrushes, frogs, toads, centipedes, ground beetles and slow worms

## WATERING

Water early in the morning when slugs are least active.

# COMPOST AND ALTERNATIVES TO PEAT

Producing your own compost or leaf mould are the best ways of improving soil. You can control what goes into the compost heap and IT'S FREE! Reduce your impact on the ever decreasing, irreplaceable and unique peat bog habitat and help lock up carbon to slow climate change.

## COMPOST BINS

There are plenty of special plastic or wooden compost bins on the market, though it is easy enough to make your own using a dustbin or four pallets wired together at the corners. Try to have two or more heaps - fill one as the others are composting.



## ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

You can use almost any organic ingredients, preferably in large and varied quantities. Fruit and vegetable peelings, leftovers, annual weeds, cut-flower remains, grass clippings, egg shells and egg boxes, soft, chopped up garden prunings and shredded paper, though not glossy magazines.

## MENU FOR SUCCESS

Try to keep a balance between lush 'green' ingredients and drier 'brown' ingredients and steer clear of meat, fish and cheese. Keep the compost moist and cover with a lid or good thickness of old newspaper to keep warmth in. Carefully turn the material over now and again to help speed up the composting process, but look out for heat-seeking slow worms, 'nesting' grass snakes or hibernating frogs, toads and newts.



## PLANET-FRIENDLY COMPOST AND MULCH

- Always buy peat-free compost
- Look out for plants grown in peat-free compost
- Green compost and biosolids are often good but can be very variable
- Leaf mould is easy to make yourself and an excellent mulch - can be used in potting compost
- Bark and wood chips are good for mulching around large shrubs, or making paths

# 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](http://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](http://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](http://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery) to find out how to get involved.