

Quick tips to help your garden wildlife

From the freezing depths of winter to scorching hot summer days, helping our local wildlife is certainly an important job all year round. Conditions that are hard on us are also difficult for our garden wildlife to deal with, so it's vital that we do what we can to make things easier for the birds, mammals, insects and other creatures that we share our neighbourhoods with.

Here are some of our quick tips to lend a hand all year round.



Spring

Plant nectar-rich flowers

Although many gardens look impressive, they can actually be deserts when it comes to biodiversity. To attract pollinating insects like butterflies, bees and hoverflies, plant flowers such as lavender, foxglove and cornflower that are rich in nectar. To support birds, you can choose plants that produce berries, like hawthorns, rowan and holly, or offer seed-producing plants such as sunflowers and teasels.

Get composting

As the weather warms up and we start gardening again it's a great time to begin your own compost pile. It is relatively cheap to buy a specialist bin (or make your own) into which you can feed food leftovers, garden waste and paper to provide a valuable habitat for invertebrates and amphibians. Eventually it will turn into an enriching compost that can be used to add nutrients and help promote growth in your garden.

Is your garden wildlife friendly? Visit southyarewildlifegroup.org southyarewildpatch.org for more information, hints and tips

Summer



Make a wild patch

Summer might be the season when our gardens are looking their best but resisting the urge to tidy can be hugely beneficial to our wildlife. Letting grass, weeds and flowers grow in certain areas can provide important habitats for insects, mammals and birds. Try creating your own 'Wild Patch' and watch the wildlife flourish.

Provide fresh water

Offering water for drinking and cooling off is a great way to help wildlife during hot days. Baths or troughs will be greatly appreciated by both birds and insects. Try to use harvested rainwater collected in a water butt for the best results. You could even look into creating a wildlife pond to add a new habitat to your garden – tips can be found on our website to help you out.



Find us on Facebook and Twitter!



Have you got a Wild Patch? Register it on our website and join the Wild Patch community: southyarewildpatch.org



Autumn

Create habitat piles

Autumn is a great time of year to create habitat piles to be used as refuges by wildlife over the winter. Piles of sticks, fallen leaves, wood and compost offer accommodation for an array of invertebrate life along with hibernating amphibians and mammals. Try not to disturb these shelters and remember that if you're having a bonfire the wood pile can be very attractive to hedgehogs, so if possible check them before lighting!

Put down the pruners

Many people take the signs of autumn to be an ideal time to prune plants in their garden. However, leaving perennials and other border plants intact is a better idea as their seed heads can be an attractive source of food for birds. Their stems can also provide shelter for insects. Bushy hedges and sprawling ivy also provide a great perch for sheltering birds and somewhere to hide for overwintering butterflies like small tortoiseshells or peacocks.

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Winter

Keep feeding our feathered friends

As insects die off and fruits become scarcer, food sources can dry up over the winter. This means it's crucially important to top up bird feeders through the winter months. Choose energy-providing foods that are high in fats and nutrients and remember to clear out those frozen or blocked feeders during cold snaps.

Check your water sources

It isn't just about remembering to provide food during winter, having access to a source of fresh, clean water is just as important for garden wildlife. Clear out water baths, unfreeze them (with hot water not antifreeze!) and remember to try and prevent your pond from becoming an ice-rink as this can be devastating to amphibians that call it their home.



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