



GARDENS

1. INTRODUCTION

Managed appropriately, private gardens can be extremely rich in wildlife. They can support a number of important small-scale habitats including ponds, hedgerows, mature trees, walls, species-rich grassland and a wide range of useful flowers.



Bee on Buddleia © D.Lowe

Collectively, gardens combine to form a large habitat for wildlife. In urban areas they can act as wildlife corridors between parks, open spaces, allotments, woods and eventually the countryside. In agricultural areas gardens can provide valuable refuges for a variety of wildlife that has come to depend upon both habitats for its survival. Although it is untrue to say that conventional gardening methods are of no value to wildlife, a more environmentally friendly approach would be of much greater benefit to local biodiversity and could potentially support endangered or unusual species.

Depending upon size, a range of habitats can be created to maximise wildlife including woodland edge, flower-rich grassland, scrub, ponds and streams. With careful planning even a small garden can increase its wildlife value and for less ambitious gardeners a few simple changes such as berry bearing bushes or insect friendly flowers can make a notable difference. By providing the right conditions many species, including some that are struggling in the wider countryside, can be encouraged and supported.

Good practices include non-chemical forms of weed and pest control or using target-specific rapidly degrading chemicals such as *Glyphosate*, recycling of garden waste (especially for compost) and less frequent mowing. Feeding birds and providing nest boxes, ladybird houses and bat boxes can all help.

Involving communities in wildlife gardening and informal surveys is a great way to promote sustainability issues e.g. healthy eating, waste minimisation, re-use and recycling through composting, natural forms of pest control (not chemical control) and the importance of conserving biodiversity.

2. OUR OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS	Target
A. Set up a Wildlife Gardening Initiative (WGI) to raise awareness and provide information, advice and support on the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife.	2004
B. Develop a system of local recording to monitor the health of garden habitats and wildlife populations.	2006
C. Stimulate local action to benefit garden wildlife through Local Agenda 21 and other community initiatives.	by 2004

ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS

- Ponds, Lakes & Reservoirs
- Hedgerows
- The Built Environment
- School Grounds
- Parks & Public Open Spaces
- Traditional Orchards

ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS

- Bats
- Great Crested Newt
- Song Thrush

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

There are no National BAP objectives or targets for gardens.

4. CURRENT STATUS

Gardens tend to be managed using conventional methods where benefit to wildlife is more or less incidental rather than planned. The 'ad hoc' feeding of birds is a good example. Commonly, wildlife is often disadvantaged through a variety of well-established gardening practices. It is clear that gardening with wildlife in mind has increased over the last few years but because gardens exist in the 'private sphere' it is difficult to obtain accurate knowledge about the full extent of the change.

There are no reliable figures for the area occupied by gardens in the sub-region.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

Great crested newt, bats and slow worm can all be present in residential areas. These are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

4.2 Current Factors Affecting The Habitat

- **Over-use of chemical herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers** which can affect wildlife like song thrushes (which are poisoned by slug pellets).
- **Over-use of non-native and hybrid species** which may flower at the wrong time of year or have flowers not attractive to insects
- **The use of materials from controversial sources** such as peat (which is damaging to the rare and important peat bog habitat), limestone from limestone pavements and wooden garden furniture from primary rainforest
- **Excessive tidiness**, reducing habitats and food for wildlife and limiting biodiversity
- **Media coverage** is increasing the enthusiasm for wildlife gardening

The way in which people manage their gardens is quite obviously, and rightly, a matter of personal choice and so the focus of any Action Plan has to be on education and raising awareness to try and stimulate change. The objective, therefore, is to encourage an increase in wildlife friendly gardening by showing how a different approach can benefit wildlife and also be satisfying to the gardener.

5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

- Campaign and education work by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Warwickshire Museum and organisations such as the Henry Doubleday Research Association.
- Local competitions e.g. the 2001 Alcester Wildlife Garden Competition.
- Personal websites offering shared experiences.
- The Wildlife Trust promotes Wildlife Gardening through a leaflet and are about to employ a community based officer who will look to initiate a Wildlife Gardening Initiative in Solihull.
- Various colleges have wildlife gardening course.
- BTO / CJ Garden BirdWatch encourages members nationally to record bird species using their gardens and collates the information annually.
- In 2002 Butterfly Conservation ran the first national Garden Butterfly Count which produced butterfly survey results for over 11,000 gardens nationally. This survey was repeated in 2003 and there are plans to run it again in 2004.
- Coventry Organic Gardeners Club encourages the use of techniques and products that encourage local wildlife.
- Ryton Organic Gardens at Ryton - on- Dunsmore promotes the benefits and delights of organic gardening.

- A large local contingency of natural historians (in over 60 local natural history groups) who provide many fine examples of wildlife-friendly gardens.
- Increasing availability and marketing of wildlife-attractive features for gardens such as bird feeders and food, artificial ponds, artificial wild bee nests, etc.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS (some dates amended – Core Steering Group – Feb 2008)

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
Policy & Legislation				
PL1. Review and where necessary amend or develop policies on the consumption of peat and other unsustainable resources, with the aim of achieving reduction in their consumption in all sectors and for all purposes.	LBAPSG	NE WWT LAs	2005	A, C
PL2. Where suitable alternatives exist, consumptive use of non-sustainable resources by central and local government and statutory agencies, including contracted work, should cease.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2005	A
PL3. Promote policies within Development Design Guides for the inclusion of wildlife valuable gardens.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2006	A
Advisory				
A.1 Encourage community composting or anaerobic digestion facilities and promote use of these and other products as alternatives to peat.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2006	A, C
A2. Produce/promote Best Practice Guidelines for gardens to inform landowners of the importance of garden habitats as a wildlife resource in both urban and rural areas.	LBAPSG	RSPB BC BTO LAs WWT	2006	A
A3. Undertake a review of existing information and develop a central library of wildlife gardening information for access by interested parties.	LBAPSG	BTO BC WWT LAs RSPB	2006	A, C

Research & Monitoring				
RM1. Establish a simple grading system for the wildlife value of gardens to give a rough quantitative baseline for the value of the garden resource.	WCC	LAs BC	2005	B
RM2. Investigate the input of data on garden habitat onto GIS database.	HBA	LAs WM	2010	B
Communication, Education & Publicity				
CP1. Establishment of a Wildlife Gardening Initiative.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2004	A
CP2. Encourage the involvement of young people in wildlife gardening through existing channels.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2007	A, C
CP3. Organise and deliver wildlife gardening training days to illustrate best management techniques.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2004- 2015	A, C
CP4. Raise the profile of wildlife gardening in the county by appropriate local publicity around surveys and advice.	LBAPSG	LAs	2005- 2015	A, C
CP5. Promote wildlife gardening through 'Britain in Bloom' Criteria, Gardeners World Live and Open Garden initiatives such as the National Garden Scheme and other relevant schemes.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs	2005	C

Abbreviations: BC – Butterfly Conservation, BTO – British Trust for Ornithology, NE – Natural England, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LA – Local Authority, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, + RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, WCC – Warwickshire County Council, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. REFERENCES (see LBAP Bibliography web page)

8. FURTHER INFORMATION (see separate Links web page for links to web sites)

UK Built-up Areas & Gardens Biodiversity Action Plan no.62

British Trust for Ornithology
Native Trees and Flowers
Biodiversity in Urban Gardens in Sheffield (BUGS) project
Flora Locale – The Knowledge Zone

Natural England (2004) *Gardening with Wildlife in Mind CD ROM* (Plant Press, FREEPOST, Lewes BN7 2ZZ, £9.99 plus £1.50 p & p in UK, tel. 01273 476151)

Forum for Gardening with Wildlife in Mind (2007) *'Let our gardens live! A manifesto for gardens, people and nature'* .

See: www.naturalengland.org.uk/campaigns/breathingplaces/manifesto.htm

Natural England (2004) Many leaflets including: *Minibeasts in the garden, Wildflower meadows - create one in your garden, Composting and peat-free gardening, Garden ponds and boggy areas: havens for wildlife, Mammals in your garden* Free from the EN Enquiry Service, tel. 01733 455101 or email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Centre for Alternative Technology (2005) *The Little Book of Slugs*.
Tel. 01654 705950

Buglife (2004) Information on the habitat-management requirements of key invertebrates CD-Rom £34.99 from Beverley Doyle by email at: beverley.doyle@buglife.org.uk

Louise Bardsley (2005) *The Wildlife Pond Handbook* £12.99. New Holland.

Mammal Trust UK – *Garden Mammal Survey 2006* – 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG. Tel. 0207 498 5262 or email: enquiries@mtuk.org

'Garden Organic' , Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry, Warwickshire, CV8 3LG. Tel: 024 76 303517 or email: enquiry@hdra.org.uk

Royal Horticultural Society & The Wildlife Trusts *'Wild About Gardens'* Project. and *'Wildlife Gardening for Everyone'* Question & Answer book. 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Tel. 020 7834 4333 or email: info@rhs.org.uk

Ken Thompson(2006) *No Nettles Required – the reassuring truth about wildlife gardening*. Eden Project Books.

Sue Everett (2007) *British wild plants for wildlife schemes*. British Wildlife, vol.18, no.3:161-168

R.Lewington (2008). *'Guide to Garden Wildlife'* ISBN 978-0-9531399-7-2. £12.95 or £11.95 incl. p&p from Books Dept. British Wildlife Publishing, the Old Dairy, Milton on Stour Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5PX

9. CONTACT

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