



WILDLIFE GARDENING GUIDE



Prepared by the Green Infrastructure team at Woking Borough Council. With thanks to the Surrey Wildlife Trust, Woking Environment Action and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for their comment and input.

For more information, email green@woking.gov.uk or visit www.woking.gov.uk.

Adopted September 2023.

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**PLANET
WORKING**

10 TOP TIPS FOR GREENER WILDLIFE GARDENING



GROW A MIX OF PLANTS INCLUDING TREES AND SHRUBS. THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE NATIVE, BUT AVOID ANYTHING INVASIVE!



LOOK AFTER MATURE TREES. THEY PROVIDE FOOD AND SHELTER FOR WILDLIFE AND STORE LOTS OF CARBON

CREATE A DEAD WOOD PILE TO PROVIDE LOTS OF NUTRIENTS FOR VISITING CREATURES

ADD A WATER FEATURE SUCH AS A POND OR BIRD BATH FOR ANIMALS TO DRINK FROM

MAKE AND USE YOUR OWN COMPOST AS SOIL FERTILISER



PROVIDE FOOD FOR WILDLIFE USING SHRUBS WITH BERRIES OR BIRD FEEDERS

LEAVE A PATCH OF GRASS AND WEEDS TO GROW LONG AS A HABITAT FOR SMALLER CREATURES



ACCEPT SOME DAMAGE TO YOUR PLANTS TO HELP THE ECOSYSTEMS THRIVE IN BALANCE

GARDEN SUSTAINABLY. AVOID USING PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES AND PEAT, AND BE CAREFUL WITH WATER

DON'T BE TOO TIDY OR TOO MESSY! BALANCE IS KEY

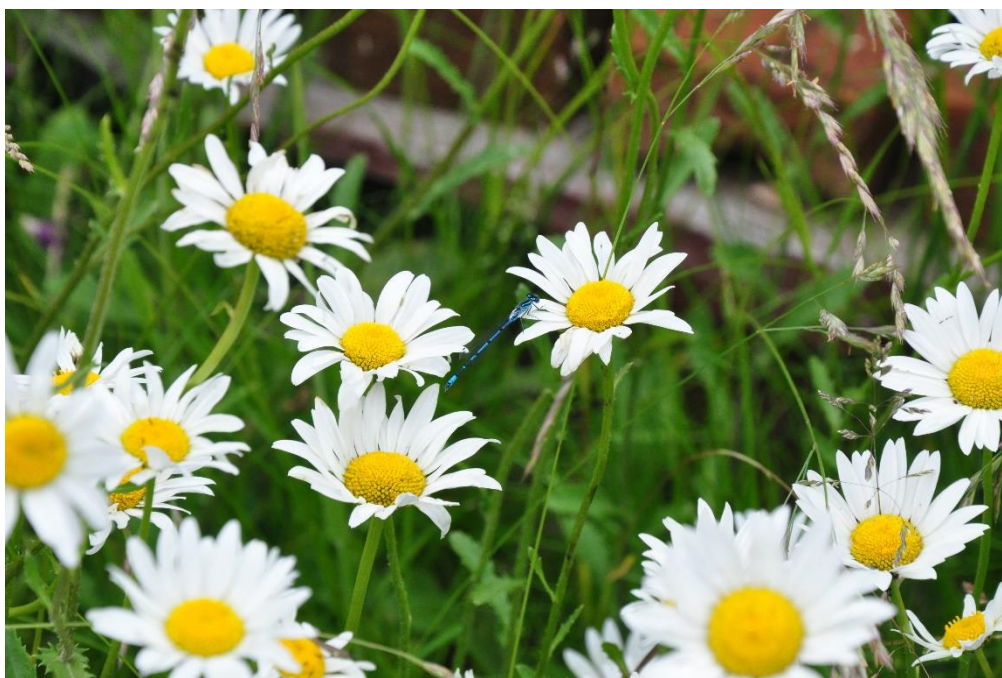


Introduction

Planet Woking's Wildlife Gardening Guide was inspired by a resident request for wildlife gardening advice following a presentation called '[Invisible gardens: wildlife havens](#)' given by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in a series of [Planet Woking talks](#). This guide aims to encourage you to do what you can at home to promote biodiversity as well as to help tackle climate change by adopting eco-friendly gardening practices. Over 82.9% of the UK population lives in urban areas of 10,000 people or more, a figure that is expected to increase in the future ([GOV.UK](#), 2019). Domestic gardens provide a significant amount of green space within urban settings, with 12% of Surrey being covered by gardens ([Surrey Wildlife Trust](#)), and are therefore critical for biodiversity conservation and carbon reduction.

Gardens come in many shapes and sizes, from the humble window box to a large back lawn, and there are lots of ways you can use the space you have to support the natural environment. Green spaces are mutually beneficial to both people and the planet as they not only play a crucial part in our health and social wellbeing, but also mitigate flooding, store excess carbon, provide habitat havens for wildlife, and are an ideal environment for pollinators. Put together, the UK's gardens together cover an area larger than all our National Nature Reserves combined, so their importance for wildlife should not be underestimated ([The Wildlife Trusts](#)).

In this guide, you will find a whole host of ideas and suggestions for how you can use your outdoor space to help support wildlife and biodiversity in Woking borough, as well as how to garden in a sustainable manner. From trees to water features, wildflowers to wall climbers, there are so many options for making your outdoor space a welcoming environment for wildlife. We hope you will be inspired by the ideas inside.



A damselfly on a daisy.

How is the council caring for biodiversity in our green spaces?

Biodiversity refers to the incredible variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi ([National Geographic](#)). Unfortunately, despite dedicated conservation work over the course of the last century, nature is declining - and quickly. One third of species in Surrey are now lost or in decline, so it is more important than ever that councils have robust strategies in place to protect the nature around us ([Surrey Wildlife Trust](#)).

Woking Borough Council set out its commitment to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and green spaces in the borough in the [Natural Woking](#) strategy, adopted in 2016. The strategy details how we intend to enhance the provision and accessibility of green spaces in Woking, conserve existing biodiversity and habitats, and create opportunities for species to return to the borough.

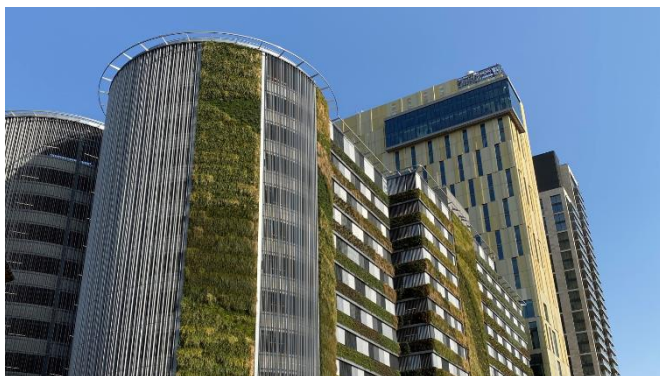
The Natural Woking strategy includes themes such as restoring habitats, increasing biodiversity in urban areas, adapting to changes in climate and population, and strengthening our green infrastructure network for future generations. You can read more about how we intend to achieve these and other goals [here](#).

Some of the ways we are meeting this commitment in our urban spaces are outlined below.

Green walls

The council has installed multiple 'living walls' in the town centre – walls covered in greenery to create a vertical garden where space is limited. Living walls help improve air quality by trapping pollutants, and create an attractive green space which provides shelter and food for wildlife.

Green walls can be found on the Victoria Place car parks, at [Dukes Court](#) and along the high street where [ivy screens](#) have been installed.



A green wall on the Victoria Place car parks.



Wildflowers on Lockfield Drive.

Partnership work

The council works with a number of local partners to pool our resources into green initiatives to boost our urban biodiversity. One such initiative is the ‘wildflowers in Woking’ project, which encourages local groups and individuals to let grass and wildflowers grow taller in their private gardens. Residents can also seek approval from Surrey County Council to let their roadside verges grow wild as part of the [Blue Campaign](#). Suitable green areas were also sown for wildflower patches.

Wildflowers are an important part of biodiversity as they provide for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and other insects. They also create a palate of colour in our urban environments, making beautiful outdoor spaces.

The wildflowers in Woking initiative was supported by partners including Serco, Woking Environment Action and Natural Goldsworth Park. Read more about it [here](#), and read about wildflowers across Woking borough [here](#).

Wild About Woking

Wild About Woking was an event run in 2022 by Woking Borough Council in partnership with the Surrey Wildlife Trust and other local environmental organisations such as Surrey Bird Club, Surrey Bat Group, and Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. The event celebrated the diversity of wildlife in Woking and encouraged the public to learn more about how they can help ‘green’ our town centre and support its natural life.

Read more about Wild About Woking [here](#).



The Woking Borough Council stand at Wild About Woking.



Menzies corporate volunteering day at Horsell Common.

Green volunteering

One way Woking Borough Council is helping the wider community to support our green spaces is by encouraging local groups to take up green volunteering opportunities through Volunteer Woking. One such group is local firm Menzies Accountancy, who took part in a company volunteering day where staff helped to clear overgrown woodland and garden areas at two local schools and for the community group Sheerwater Together.

As well as boosting team spirit, the volunteering day also contributed to a sense of pride of place by supporting the biodiversity and health of the green spaces the team worked in. Volunteer Woking has a range of volunteering opportunities for companies, families, groups and individuals to get involved with.

Read more about Menzies's company volunteering day [here](#), and find out more about Volunteer Woking [here](#).

Allotments

The allotment sites across Woking borough give local people the opportunity to get stuck in with gardening even without a private garden to use, and help to green the grey in urban areas. There are currently ten allotment sites in the borough, with costs starting from just £25 a year. View the full list of allotment sites [here](#).



Knaphill allotment.



A Great Crested Newt. Photo: Natural England, Peter Wakely.

Great Crested Newt pilot

Woking Borough Council is part of a pilot scheme with Natural England to take a more proactive approach to protecting the Great Crested Newt (GCN) population in the borough. The GCN is a European protected species, meaning it is illegal to capture, injure or disturb them without a license. The pilot offers a range of benefits, both for conserving the GCN and its habitat and for streamlining the process developers go through in acquiring a licence from Natural England regarding GCN. Find out more about the scheme [here](#).

Creating a wildlife habitat haven

Gardens provide habitats for a great number of creatures and there are lots of ways you help support the biodiversity in your garden by providing shelter, food sources and safe passage through to other gardens. Here are some suggestions for how you can turn your outdoor space into a wonderful home for wildlife.

Install bird feeders

As well as setting up a hanging bird feeder on a tree or outdoor hook, you can also help feed the birds during winter with a feeding table. Different species of birds enjoy different foods – sparrows love seeds whereas woodpeckers are partial to peanuts – but, in general, foods with a high fat content help keep the birds warm in the colder months. Place just enough food out in the morning for your garden bird population so it will be gone before night time. Make sure you wash your feeders regularly to avoid the spread of garden bird disease.



A woodpecker at a bird feeder.



A wasp drinking from a shallow pool of water.

Provide water sources

As well as a food source, local wildlife also need access to water. A simple bowl filled with water will be gratefully received by visitors to your garden. Don't forget to keep it filled on hot days and make sure it doesn't freeze over in winter. Placing a few pebbles in the water will provide a safe place for insects to land. A bowl placed close to a bird feeder might also be used for a quick bath.

Create green corridors

A green corridor is a deliberate gap in a garden fence which aids the movement of wildlife and helps animals like hedgehogs pass from one garden to the next. By considering our gardens as part of a wider connection of outdoor spaces, we can better provide for local wildlife. Hedges are also a great option for allowing animals to pass through. If you'd like to help support hedgehogs in your garden, you can find out more about the Woking Environment Action Woking Hedgehogs project [here](#).



A gap under a fence with a sign indicating this is a 'hedgehog highway', or green corridor.



An insect hotel with a red mason bee.

Build insect hotels

Insects are an essential component of a flourishing garden. By creating an appealing home for mini beasts, you will be supporting many different insects and pollinators, including solitary bees that need somewhere dry and warm to raise their young, take refuge from predators and hibernate over winter. The deeper the holes in the hotel, the better, with 9cm depth minimum recommended. Be sure to place your insect hotel in a sunny location. Learn how to build your own bug hotel from Little Planet Woking [here](#).

Do nothing!

Sometimes, the best way you can help your garden is to take a step back and let it manage itself. The less human interference in a garden, the more its ecosystems and processes will organically flourish. Natural processes, such as breaking down waste material, benefit a remarkable amount of wildlife. Decaying wood and plants provide nutrients for lots of creatures, such as cellar slugs which help decompose waste material, so don't always be tempted to put it in the garden bin. Woodlice, earwigs, earthworms and beetles also help breakdown organic matter and in turn provide a food source for hedgehogs, frogs and birds.



Woodlice help breakdown decaying plants.



Hedgehogs enjoy eating earwigs and beetles.

Similarly, allowing a bit of damage in your garden can actually be the best thing for it. It can be tempting to step in and take action if you see your plants affected by pests, disease and other factors, but letting the damage play out can help a lot more creatures than you might think. Avoiding pesticides will mean there is more food around for animals that prey on pests, and rotting plant material can provide homes for lots of insects, as well as enriching your soil. These processes have existed in perfectly balanced ecosystems for hundreds of years, and most of the time do not need any intervention from eager gardeners.

If you're planning to be out in the garden in the colder months clearing up the garden for spring, be careful not to disturb any sleeping wildlife. Be sure to wait until temperatures are consistently above 10 degrees before cutting back last year's plants, to ease any hibernating creatures into the warmer months!

Plant for variety

Plant choice is important to consider when trying to attract wildlife. Whilst emphasis should be given to plants native to the northern hemisphere, exotic plants from the southern hemisphere can be used to extend the growing season as these tend to flower later in the year in comparison to northerly species. It is also important to use plants that can withstand the drier and hotter weather we are increasingly experiencing as a result of climate change.

As well as standard garden flowers, try to plant hedges and shrubs that will grow berries for wildlife to eat, or small trees that provide shelter and food as well as absorbing carbon.

In general, the more plants a garden can offer throughout the year, the greater the number of bees and other pollinating insects it will support ([Salisbury et al. 2015](#)). Read more on this under 'planting for all seasons'.



A greater variety of plants and flowers will attract a greater number of insects.

Providing for pollinators

One of the most important ways your garden can contribute to local biodiversity is by providing for pollinators. A great number of insects including butterflies, moths, flies, wasps and, most importantly, bees are pollinators. These creatures play a vital role in many ecosystems, including helping to grow a lot of the foods we eat, so it's important to support them with the right type of plants in your garden. Find out more about why pollinators are so vital from [Buglife](#) and [The Wildlife Trusts](#).

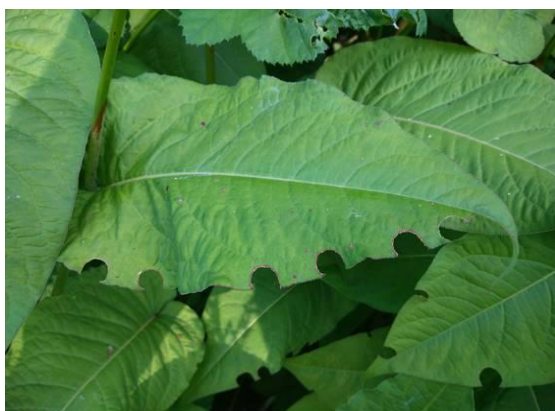
Research undertaken by the RHS has shown that growing a mixture of plants from different countries and regions that will flower at different times in the year is most effective for attracting pollinating insects ([RHS](#), 2015). This will ensure there is a good supply of pollen and nectar year-round for pollinators to enjoy. More on this under 'planting for all seasons'.

You also want to aim for a mix of flower types, including open flowers like daisies, tubular flowers like honeysuckle, and umbellifer flowers like fennel. Plants with big leaves can be used by leafcutter bees to make their nests. For inspiration on which plants are best to use and when, check out the RHS's '[plants for pollinators](#)' garden guide. Be sure to keep your soil happy with lots of compost and green cover so the plants on top can thrive.

As an extra help, a water source, such as a shallow bowl filled with water, will encourage pollinators into your garden as well, especially with stones or pebbles in to aid safe landing.

As far as possible, it is important to avoid using herbicides and pesticides in your garden as these can be extremely damaging for pollinators. It is much better to prevent getting pests and diseases in the first place by keeping your garden hygienic and encouraging natural enemies. The RHS has some advice for getting started with pesticide alternatives [here](#), and you can check out Pesticide Action Network UK's guide for gardening without pesticides [here](#).

Allotment holders might also like to read Surrey Wildlife Trust's advice for [bee-friendly allotments](#).



A leaf chewed by a leafcutter bee.



A shallow bowl of water with pebbles in provides a water source for bees.

Planting for all seasons

An important part of making your garden as biodiverse as possible is making sure you're planting for all seasons. This means growing a variety of plants so that your garden is blossoming and providing food and nectar for wildlife all year round.

The key to this is knowing what to plant and when. Hardy exotic plants from warmer climates will flower later in the year, adding some colour and variety to your garden in the winter months. Plants in the RHS '[plants for pollinators](#)' resource are listed by flowering season for some inspiration. You may have some plants in your garden that look like weeds because they only flower once a year – give them a chance and see what eventually grows!



Lily-of-the-valley flowers during spring.



Several trees and shrubs have red berries that persist into the winter.

If you're after something that you can grow all year round, try growing vegetables or herbs. These can offer great flowers for pollinators, especially mint or thyme. Some of the easiest herbs to grow are mint, lavender, fennel and chamomile ([Soil Association](#)), and you'll save the single use plastic from buying a bag from the supermarket! If you can't get your hands on anything else to grow, daisies and weeds will provide pollen with little effort required.

In the springtime, get involved with [No Mow May](#) – a promise to not mow your lawn during the month of May. You may be surprised by what grows in your garden and the local wildlife will thank you!



Oxeye daisies on an uncut lawn.



Wildflowers on an uncut lawn.

Making the most of the space you have

Whether you have an extensive back garden or just a few windowsills to spare, there are gardening options for everyone.

Short on space?

If you're lacking in on ground space, maybe it's time to start thinking vertically! Try utilising hanging and vertical garden features. Window boxes, hanging pockets and green wall climbers are all great ways to help 'green' a smaller space.

Climbers are plants grown up against a garden wall or fence. Some climbers can grow up a wall using tendrils or sticky pads for support, while some need to be tied to supports. There are climbers suitable for all garden spaces and preferences, with some growing large and wild while some are smaller and neater. Some climbers are evergreen, whereas deciduous species will lose their leaves over winter.

Climbers are great for biodiversity as they provide all the wildlife benefits of the other plants in your garden all year round, as well as making your outdoor space look more attractive. They can also [help keep your house insulated](#) if grown properly! Check out lots of tips on setting up a living wall with climbers on the Planet Woking website [here](#).



A hanging basket.



A shrub growing through a trellis.

Another great option for gardens with limited space is a green roof. Also known as a living roof, this is when vegetation is used to cover part or all of a roof, perhaps on a shed or a bin store. The best plants to use for this are species like sedum, which are used to dry conditions and can be found in a range of different colours. As well as adding a new feature to your garden, a green roof will help soak up rainwater, absorb extra carbon, and provide a habitat for lots of wildlife. Find out how to set up a green roof [here](#).

No garden? No problem! Bring the outdoors in with indoor plants and gardens. Succulents and houseplants can spruce up an indoor space with a hint of the outdoors. Just be careful to place your plants in the right location for them to thrive, and you should feel the benefits of improved mood, increased productivity, and even reduced blood pressure! More info from the RHS [here](#).

To be an extra eco-friendly gardener, lots of garden centres will take plastic plant pots and trays and recycle them – just be sure to check with your local centre before you make the trip! Cardboard tubes and yoghurt pots can be used for growing seeds before composting or recycling. Seed and plant swaps are a great, cost-effective way to source plants suitable for your local growing conditions.

If you can't accommodate green space at home, there are lots of allotments and community gardens in the borough where you can get stuck in with gardening. See 'grow your own' for more information.

Got a bigger garden to play with?

Make the best use of your space by planting a variety of flowers to keep pollinators visiting all year round. You can grow flowers in a controlled area, such as in containers or a wildflower meadow, or leave a section of your lawn to flower freely. Better still, leave your grass cuttings on the lawn after it has been mowed and it will help encourage daisies and other plants to grow.

Did you know that ponds support two-thirds of our native freshwater species of plants, invertebrates, mammals and amphibians? If you have enough space, ponds are a great breeding ground for amphibians and add a lovely water feature to your garden. Find out more about ponds under 'water features'.

If you want to try something new, why not set up a potager garden? Combining functionality with beauty, potager gardens grow common food ingredients, often in geometric patterns. Try to plant foods that grow during different seasons so that you have fresh vegetables year-round.

Those looking for something with a bit more height could think about planting a small garden tree. There are many trees that won't grow to a great size and will make a colourful addition to your garden, as well as enriching the soil around them with their roots. The RHS provides lots of advice on which trees are best for different small gardens [here](#). And if your garden already has an older, mature tree in it, be sure to take good care of it – it will provide shelter and food for a great number of creatures and absorb a lot of carbon.



Plants growing in a pond.



A potager garden.

Water features

Water is as essential to wildlife as it is to humans, so adding water features to your garden is a great way to encourage critters into your space and help them thrive. And water features look beautiful too, so everybody wins!

Water features don't have to be big or complicated. You can encourage insects and smaller creatures into your garden with a mini water habitat set up in a large plant pot. Use stones to create steps and ledges so wildlife can climb in and out safely. If you strategically place your water features, you can enjoy watching the wildlife while at home!

If you've got a bit more time, try digging a small pond to attract amphibian friends and birds. An area of long grass nearby provides a perfect place for frogs to take cover and reeds will provide some seeds for birds to snack on. As tempting as it may be to fill your pond with fish, it might be better for your pond to be fish-free as they can eat tadpoles and other pond animals, and fish food can encourage green algae and weeds that are damaging to a pond.



A pond set up in a plant pot.



A blackbird perched on a bird bath.

If you do install a pond, take a moment to think about what you want to plant around the outside of the water. While exotic plants can bring some variation to your garden, native plants generally provide better support for a variety of invertebrates, in turn enticing other wildlife to your pond. For hints and tips about setting up a garden pond, read this advice from the [Wildlife Trusts](#) and [Natural England](#).

Water sources are also vital for supporting the ecosystems in your garden. Ponds are great for attracting insect life which in turn provides food for birds such as house martins and bats. As long as the water source is regularly cleaned and topped up, it will act as a lifeline for a wealth of biodiversity. Just remember to be safe and use fencing around the perimeter if necessary.

If you're looking to entice some larger visitors, a bird bath will encourage lots of birds in for a drink and a wash. A water feature with sloping sides - so all species can get safely in and

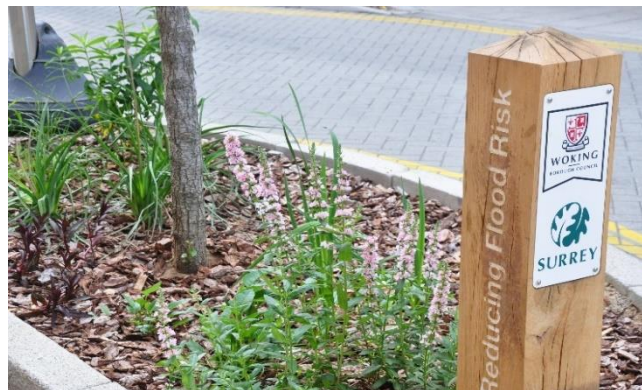
out - situated in the shade is the perfect environment to draw customers in. Visiting birds can act as natural pest control, with a family of blue tits eating up to 100,000 aphids a year, so it's worth keeping them coming back. Read some tips for setting up a great bird bath [here](#).

As well as installing water features, it is also important to consider how you can manage an excess of water in your garden. In urban landscapes where impermeable surfaces like concrete are common, there is an increase in surface water run off which can cause flooding, impacting the wildlife in your garden. For a simple solution, attach a water butt to the downpipe from your roof gutter. The butt harvests rainwater, preventing it from flooding your lawn, and provides you with an extra water source so you can save money and natural resources.

For a more aesthetic solution, try creating a rain garden. A rain garden is simply a shallow depression in your garden that you can fill with flowers and vegetation which captures water, slowing down its progression into drainage systems. They are an attractive solution to attenuate excess water and help attract wildlife to your garden. Find out more in our [rain garden guide](#).



A water butt attached to a garden shed.



One of the rain gardens set up by Woking Borough Council across the borough.

Transforming your front garden

While many people focus their gardening energy on the green space behind their house, there's a lot of potential to be found in front gardens as well. Though often smaller than back gardens, with a bit of thought you can "[green the grey](#)" and turn your front garden into a wildlife haven as well. Greener front gardens are also good for your mental and physical wellbeing as a beautiful looking house helps boost your mood and being out in the front garden is a great excuse for chat with passers-by ([RHS](#), 2015).

Driveways

One key difference between front and back gardens is that front gardens are often formed around the need to accommodate a car, and many driveways are formed of solid paving which is not very inviting for plants or creatures. This also increases the risk of surface water flooding. A great compromise is to only pave two solid lines where the tyres of a car will go, leaving gaps in between for low flowers to flourish. Some easy plants to feature in your driveway gravel are creeping Jenny and creeping thyme, which have flowers that bees love. If this won't work in your garden, try to use [permeable paving](#) which will allow for better waterflow and reduced rainwater runoff.

Make use of hedges

If you've got neighbours close by, why not replace your garden fence with a hedge for some more eco-friendly privacy? As well as making your front garden look more natural, hedges such as garden privet and cherry laurel also provide essential wildlife 'corridors' for insects and small animals to pass through. Try to use a hedge that will grow flowers and berries for wildlife as well as providing nesting spots, such as Pyracantha or Cotoneaster. RHS has more information about the environmental benefits of hedges [here](#).



Front gardens have just as much potential as back gardens.



A climber growing through a trellis.

Think vertically

In order to maximise the greenery in a limited space, you might need to start thinking vertically. Window boxes, hanging baskets and climbers are all fantastic ways to get plants into your front garden without taking up a lot of ground space. You can also use potted plants for a controlled splash of colour.

Supporting wildlife

Don't forget to give the local wildlife a helping hand in your front garden. Insect hotels, bird feeders, nest boxes and rockeries all help animals by providing shelter, food, water and a place to rest, and can be set up in your front garden as well as the back one.



A bird box in some wall ivy.



A garden rockery.

Don't be too tidy!

If you don't have the time to maintain a well-kept front garden – don't worry! Leaving an area of grass overgrown and undisturbed offers valuable shelter for lots of creatures, as well as beautiful flowers to look at.

If you've got a verge outside your house, this can be the perfect location to let grow wild. You can apply to Surrey County Council for your verge to be by-passed by grass cutters so that the flowers and plants there can thrive. This is part of the Blue Campaign, and those taking part can get a blue heart to place in their verge to spread awareness about why it is growing longer. Find out more [here](#).



A messy and colourful section of a garden.



A verge left to grow long with wildflowers.

Although much of this guide has detailed how to carefully cultivate beautiful green spaces, sometimes the best thing you can do with your garden to support local wildlife is to just let a section of it be.

The more you can leave your green space alone to become 'wild', the more unexpected flowers will grow, enticing a variety of creatures back into your garden. Even plants we often try to avoid, such as stinging nettles, are great for your garden's biodiversity, providing for lots of insects and attracting hedgehogs, frogs and toads. Nettles in particular are a key food source for caterpillars and butterflies like the Red Admiral, Painted Lady and Small Tortoiseshell species.

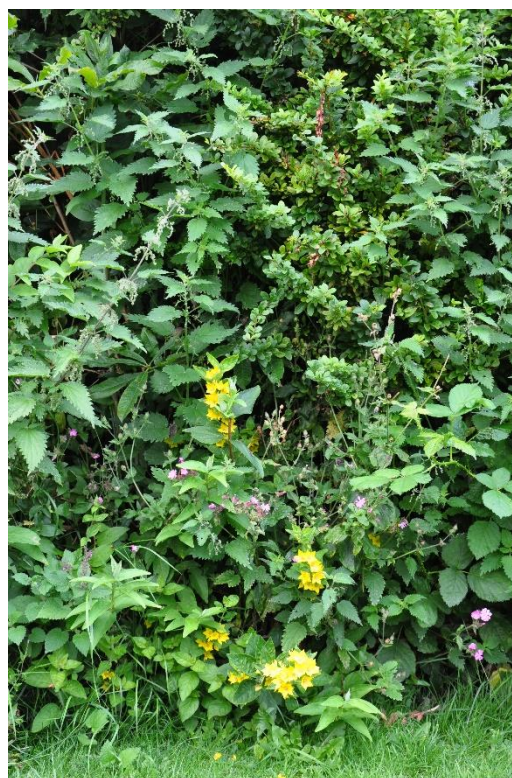
And it's not just flowers that can be left alone to help your garden out – dead wood is also a haven for lots of small creatures, including stag beetles. If you have bits of decaying wood lying around in your garden, gather it up and create a dead wood pile. Even a small pile of logs can provide shelter, hunting ground and food for a multitude of wildlife. Damp conditions will entice woodlice, spiders and beetles which become prey for larger animals like frogs, hedgehogs, and birds. And in the summer when the wood is drier, butterflies and ladybirds will move in.

Do watch out for non-native invasive species like Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, which need appropriate action to remove if they're found. Care is also needed for some other potential hazardous flora and fauna species which can be affected by pests and diseases (for more details see [tree pests and diseases](#)).

As always, balance is key. Don't be too tidy or too messy!



A messy garden area growing teasels.



A messy garden area growing stinging nettles and flowers.

Grow your own

Using your garden to grow your own produce isn't just good for pollinators and other creatures – it can save you money as well! For green-fingered residents who are short on space at home, there are opportunities to get involved with gardening in locations across the borough so nobody has to miss out on the benefits of the great outdoors.

Allotments

Owning and taking care of an allotment is not just for experienced gardeners – it's a great way for anyone to start a new hobby, get some fresh air and exercise, and grow some delicious, organic produce.

There are currently ten allotment sites in the borough of Woking, varying in price from as little as £25 a year. Check out the full list of allotment societies [here](#). Please contact the societies directly to enquire about the availability of plots.

Community gardens

In 2021, a community herb garden was set up at Colliers Close in Horsell by residents working with Serco, the Council's environmental partner. All local residents are encouraged to use the garden which, as well as providing some fresh cooking ingredients, also helps support local wildlife and biodiversity.

Similarly, Woking Environment Action has two sites growing food crops in Woking as part of their Incredible Edible programme. The sites are open for anyone to get involved with, by helping to look after the crops and also by enjoying the produce. The sites are on Rydens Way, and Lower Guildford Road in Knaphill. Find out more [here](#).

'Don't let it rot on the plot'

If your fruit trees or plot have a bumper harvest, consider taking any surplus to local organisations like the [Woking Food Bank](#) or the [Knaphill Community Fridge](#) to help those in need and save your delicious produce going to waste.



Sheets Heath allotment.

Home composting

Composting is another green way to dispose of food and garden waste, and it turns your unwanted scraps into a great resource for your plants. By creating your own compost you will not only reduce the amount of waste you produce, but you'll also end up with a great soil conditioner, providing nutrients to enhance its texture, feed micro-organisms and maintain moisture. Additionally, lots of shop-bought compost can have peat in it, which is a precious natural resource from our declining peat bogs. Peat bogs store billions of tonnes of carbon in the UK, so it's much better for the environment to avoid using this by making your own.

What can be composted?

Anything that has lived or been grown recently can be used for compost. Generally, the best ingredients to use can be organised into two groups:

Greens: nitrogen-rich ingredients that add moisture, such as uncooked fruit and vegetable peelings, cut grass, coffee grounds, tea leaves, egg shells, herbivore manure, old flowers and weeds.

Browns: carbon-rich ingredients that create air pockets, such as cardboard, paper, hay, straw, woody clippings/sawdust and dried leaves.

There are some things that you want to **avoid** putting in your compost. Meat, fish, dairy, bread, cooked food, bones, coal, and cartons with stickers or ink can all be harmful for the composting process and attract unwanted visitors.



Compost makes great fertiliser for your plants.



Lots of kitchen and garden waste can go in compost.

How to get started with composting

The trick to great composting is to ensure an equal ratio of greens and browns. Larger gardens will have space for a compost heap whereas smaller gardens may benefit from a compost bin. Make sure to turn your compost every few weeks, taking care to avoid any wildlife inside like Slow Worms, to keep it aerated and stop your compost becoming wet and pungent. Equally, in very dry weather it is important to keep it moist.

You can compost all year round, but it takes approximately nine to 12 months for the waste to turn to compost. If you can't wait that long, a hot composting bin will speed up the process and have your compost ready in as little as 90 days. Add it to flowerbeds and vegetable patches or sprinkle on your lawn to watch your garden bloom organically.

Only got a small plot?

Try worm composting instead. A 'wormery' is a small bin that works in a similar way to a compost heap, but instead uses worms to break down your kitchen and garden waste. The end result is a compost that you can use as soil conditioner, and a liquid fertiliser that can be used to water plants.

Surrey residents can get discounted compost bins and hot composters from Surrey Environment Partnership via the [home composting page](#) on their website.



A wormery can fit inside a kitchen and break down your food waste.

What's next?

Once your wildlife garden is established, that doesn't mean you have to stop thinking about biodiversity. There is always something new to learn about supporting local wildlife in your green spaces!

A great place to start is Planet Woking – Woking Borough Council's climate change and biodiversity communications programme. Check out the Planet Woking [website](#), [Facebook book](#) and [Instagram account](#) for more wildlife gardening tips.

Local and national groups, such as the [RHS](#), [Surrey Wildlife Trust](#) and [Woking Environment Action](#), provide lots of information and ideas for supporting the wildlife in your garden. WEAct even runs a [Repair Café](#) that can help you by fixing your garden tools!

The RHS has advice [on its website](#), including step-by-step guides to gardening basics and how to cultivate an eco-friendly garden. You can also pay RHS Wisley a visit for some inspiration.

The Wildlife Trusts and RHS run an annual [Wild About Gardens](#) campaign, focussing on a different plant or animal species each year and how you can encourage them into your garden. Previous years have been all about swifts, swallows and butterflies.

Woking Environment Action is looking after hedgehogs locally through their [Woking Hedgehogs](#) project, collecting information on where hedgehogs are found in the borough and raising awareness of what a hedgehog friendly garden is.

Lastly, the [Wildlife Gardening Forum](#) has a wealth of information on gardening in a manner that helps wildlife. Check out the 'how to' guides on their website for tips on a range of gardening topics.

Whether you get involved in these bigger projects, or are happy boosting your garden's biodiversity by yourself, we hope you've been inspired by a few of the ideas in this guide!



A wildlife friendly border around a garden.



A bumblebee on a teasel flower.