

# HELP GARDEN FOR CARMARTHENSHIRE'S WILDLIFE

## Tips for enhancing your garden for biodiversity

**This sheet is intended as a basic guide for house owners to conserve and enhance the value of your own backyard and private gardens for wildlife**

### Why garden for wildlife?

Gardens can support a wealth of wildlife. They can provide a refuge for a huge variety of birds and insects. Other species such as hedgehogs and amphibians may now have significant strongholds within our gardens.

Over recent years gardens have become increasingly important habitats for wildlife, including for many species now rare in the wider countryside. Gardens can also be important wildlife corridors. In our towns, a large proportion of available wildlife habitat is provided by gardens, which are the 'green lungs' of our urban environment.

Some gardening practices however may be detrimental from a wildlife perspective. Over use of pesticides and fertilisers, over-tidying of gardens, drainage of ponds and use of peat can all have a harmful effect. However, taking simple action means that we can all garden in a wildlife-friendly way.

### Top Tips to bring wildlife to your garden!

- Go organic! Use compost, well-rotted manure instead of chemical fertilisers; make your own compost, try companion planting to avoid pest problems, and hand weed paths and paved areas instead of using pesticides. Encourage gardeners' friends such as frogs, toads and hedgehogs, all of which eat garden pests.
- Plant native trees and shrubs that will be more attractive to local bees and butterflies than some exotic species. Suitable tree species include aspen, bird cherry, common ash, common oak, common whitebeam, crab apple, field maple, goat willow, holly, hazel, rowan, and small leaved lime, and silver birch. Suitable shrub species include alder buckthorn, common blackthorn, common dogwood, dog-rose, guelder rose, hawthorn and spindle.
- Plant a native hedge along the boundaries to your property that will provide cover, food, and a suitable nesting site for many birds. Good native choices include blackthorn, hawthorn, dog-rose, field maple, hazel, and holly. Also, remember to cut any hedges and trees outside the bird-nesting season (March–September). Most native hedges only require cutting once every 2 years. Try and always leave some areas unmanaged that will provide a berry source for birds over the winter months.
- Create a garden pond or boggy area designed with wildlife in mind. A pond will attract frogs, newts, and dragonflies, providing it is not stocked with ornamental fish. The pond should be positioned well away from trees and preferably in full sun. Your pond should have plenty of shallow edges and be at least 1 m deep in some areas to prevent freezing in winter. Different pond sizes will attract different wildlife, but generally the bigger the better. Dragonflies will breed in ponds as small as 4 m<sup>2</sup>, whereas, toads and great crested newts prefer larger ponds (15 m<sup>2</sup> or more). If you haven't got room for a pond, provide a source of drinking water for birds and other wildlife.
- Bring vibrant colour into your garden by creating a wildflower meadow. All or part of a small lawn can be turned into a miniature meadow simply by halting the mowing ritual and preventing spraying with a weedkiller. Wildflowers can then be sown or planted as plugs into the area. Generally cowslip, ox-eye daisy, meadow cranesbill, lesser knapweed, meadow buttercup, self-heal will all do well. Wildflower meadows should be cut after the flowers have set seed. All cuttings will then need to be removed to prevent nutrient build up.

- Create borders for butterflies by planting with nectar rich flowers like buddleia, scabious, and iceplant. Plant in a sheltered, sunny spot. Also, plant hop for comma butterfly, nasturtium for large white, buckthorn for brimstone, and retain some patches of nettles for small tortoiseshell, red admiral, and peacock butterflies.
- Erect bird and bat boxes. Locate away from places where predators might attack from, such as overhanging branches, and not in full sun.
- Remember to feed birds throughout the year as they will come to rely on this valuable food source. Food to put out includes mealworms from pet shops, wild-bird seed for finches, fruit for thrushes, nuts for tits, and fat for woodpeckers.
- Try not to be too tidy! Leave piles of logs, leaves, rubble, or rocks in the garden as ideal homes for small mammals, especially hedgehogs, and mini habitats for many other animals and insects. Make sure that you check for any hibernating hedgehogs before lighting any fires.
- Make your own natural fertiliser! Recycle garden waste and vegetable kitchen scraps in a home-made box or bought compost bin.
- Use peat-free compost such as chipped bark, leaf mould, or coir and help save our peat bogs. Peat bogs are very special places for wildlife, but partly due to gardeners' demand for peat, nearly all have been destroyed in the UK.

**For more detailed information please visit the following websites:**

- [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)
- [www.butterfly-conservation.org/downloads/48/gardening.html](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/downloads/48/gardening.html);
- [www.devonwildlifetrust.org/files/uploaded/download.php?filename=Garden%20hedgerows.pdf](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/files/uploaded/download.php?filename=Garden%20hedgerows.pdf)
- [www.pondconservation.org.uk](http://www.pondconservation.org.uk)
- [www.floralocale.org](http://www.floralocale.org)
- [www.bct.org.uk](http://www.bct.org.uk)
- [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)
- [www.wildaboutgardens.org](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org)
- [www.kew.org/ksheets/peat.html](http://www.kew.org/ksheets/peat.html)

**VISIT [www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk) AND MAKE A PLEDGE TO HELP WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN!!**

