

# Encouraging wildlife in the garden

If you are looking for a cost-effective and low maintenance option to support and encourage all types of wildlife such as frogs, newts, dragonflies and bathing garden birds, it is possible to create a pond using a buried bucket or trough, with stone steps or a wooden ramp for in and out access – it will essentially serve the same purpose as a more lavish pond.

For an option that works for any sized garden, consider a bird box. Blue tits and house sparrows will flock to a bird box attached to the wall of a house. By providing food for birds in your garden, you can help ensure local species continue to thrive. When it comes to bird food, it is best to start by filling one feeder with sunflower hearts and another with peanuts. But bear in mind that diets vary greatly across different species. For example, sparrows and goldfinches enjoy seeds whereas woodpeckers aren't seed eaters at all – they prefer peanuts, fat, and even mealworms. While many birds will visit a seed feeder, they all have their preferences. Blue tits will seek out fat and suet, while great tits and robins opt for mealworms. Then again song birds such as blackbirds and thrushes prefer fruit.

In the UK, hedgehogs tend to come out of hibernation between March and May. This can be a dangerous time for them, and their most urgent need when emerging from hibernation will be fresh drinking water. To help with this, set up some water in a sturdy dish at ground-level, as well as dry hedgehog food.

Every garden regardless of size can be both bee friendly and beautiful. Bees have a similar taste to humans, in that they favour flowers with bountiful open blooms, and long flowering seasons. Examples of flowers generous in pollen and nectar include geraniums, lavender, open dahlias and globe thistle.

Also, herbs such as marjoram, sage and chives and flowering shrubs like buddleia, cotoneaster and apple blossom. A nice idea would be to make a bee 'nectar filling station'. It's simply a pot or pots filled with nectar giving flowers and a shallow dish of water (many may be surprised to know that bees need hydration too). Make sure you keep flowers blooming in the pot from March to September by changing them as they fade.

*Sean McMenemy, director of [Ark Wildlife](#)*