

LET OUR GARDENS LIVE!



A manifesto for gardens, people and nature

*Prepared by organisations belonging to
the 'Forum for Gardening with Wildlife in Mind'*

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Gardens are important for people and for wildlife. They also play a key role, often unacknowledged, in making our towns and cities pleasant places in which to live.



Alison Loram

Nature recognises no human boundaries. Gardens together form an enormous network of greenspace that can be invaluable to wildlife.

Gardens and people

We know from research that both gardens and wildlife are good for people's health, happiness and wellbeing.

Gardens are where many children make their first contact with the natural world. They are also now

often the only places where adults encounter any wildlife that isn't on a screen. They have a unique combination of roles – outdoor classroom and playground; places for healthy and productive exercise and relaxation; and private sanctuaries for people and wildlife.

This manifesto brings together for the first time a large consortium of the UK's leading wildlife and horticultural organisations, from both the private and the public sectors. It highlights the importance of gardens, both for wildlife and for people's health and wellbeing. It is aimed at those who make and influence decisions. It outlines some of the actions we need to take to protect gardens – and to help more people enjoy gardening with wildlife in mind.

Gardens cover up to a quarter of the land surface in our towns and cities and act as a 'food supermarket' for visiting and breeding birds and mammals. They support great plant diversity and are a major wildlife habitat for invertebrates, on which most other animals – as well as essential life processes – depend. Insects pollinate plants, earthworms maintain garden soil while other invertebrate species help to recycle organic matter.

Gardens are under threat. In London, a vast area (32 square kilometres: 22 times the size of Hyde Park) has been lost through gardens being paved over. Elsewhere, the situation is even worse, with nearly half of all homes in the north-east of England having paved over most of their front gardens. New houses are built on former domestic gardens. More people now have paved patios in their gardens than those who have trees.

- We want to see more information and guidance that is simple, consistent and fact-based, to help people look after their gardens and allotments sustainably and productively, with wildlife in mind.
- We want to be sure that all wildlife gardening products will actually help wildlife.
- We want all children to have access to a garden rich in wildlife, at home or at school – or both.
- We want those people who wish to buy native plants to be able to do so in the knowledge that their declared origins are accurate and traceable.
- We want to help link people to nature through their gardens, to encourage a wider and deeper appreciation of biodiversity.



Alison Loram

Gardens and wildlife

Gardens cannot replace specialised habitats. They can, though, provide havens for many of the species now declining on intensively managed farmland in the countryside, from bumblebees and hedgehogs to song thrushes and frogs. As our climate changes, the network of gardens may help our wildlife to adapt and migrate through the country.

- We will support additional studies on how best to manage gardens for wildlife, in cities and the countryside.
- We will promote more research on products aimed at attracting wildlife to gardens.
- We will commission research that ensures we learn more about how neighbouring gardens can work together to help wildlife.
- We want to get far more people involved in monitoring garden wildlife. By developing our understanding, we can improve our gardening management advice – and perhaps help wildlife adapt to climate change.

Alison Loram

Gardens and the ecosystem: planning and development

Gardens can assist the slow, safe drainage of rainwater and thus reduce the risk of flash flooding. They can also filter out atmospheric dust, cut down wind speeds and ameliorate the heat island effect. All this helps to make towns and cities more pleasant places in which to live. But gardens are now more at risk than ever before from 'infill building' and from being paved over for car parking.

- We need to ensure that towns and cities contain enough green space, including gardens, to make them liveable.
- We want property owners, developers, planners and central Government to do all they can to protect existing gardens.
- We need to collate and highlight the existing guidelines and legislation that already protect wildlife in gardens.
- We need more wildlife-friendly features in new developments.

Opposite and below: Two extremes: small urban gardens can be relaxing green havens for wildlife and people, or places from which almost all traces of life have been banished.



Our vision for gardening and wildlife

We want to inspire people to manage gardens for their own health and enjoyment, in ways that also benefit wildlife.

We want to encourage more people to:

- discover how important gardens can be for wildlife
- find enjoyment and health benefits from gardening with wildlife in mind
- use gardens to give children a richer environment for learning and play
- create valuable new habitats for wildlife in and around gardens such as ponds, hedges and living roofs on extensions, sheds and garages.

We want to help people to create more gardens that:

- are beautiful and peaceful places to enjoy
- contain wildlife habitats complementing those in nearby gardens and green spaces
- survive as a green network to help protect our homes from flooding, and our cities from overheating
- extend the resources available for wildlife in a changing global environment.

We will work with gardeners to raise awareness of the environmental benefits of gardening with wildlife in mind by, for example:

- using substitutes for peat and for sphagnum moss
- using materials from sustainably-managed sources, such as charcoal from British coppiced woodlands
- introducing techniques to enable gardens to adapt to climate change, particularly drought
- growing your own food, for healthier living and to reduce food miles
- avoiding the purchase of invasive plant species or of any product demonstrably damaging to wildlife
- adopting more organic – and less intensive – management
- using less concrete, paving and decking; surfaces that support little or no wildlife
- avoiding the use of limestone for rockeries and garden furniture made from tropical hardwoods, unless there is independent and certifiable evidence that they are sustainably managed.



Organisations and contacts

The following organisations hereby pledge their support for this manifesto:

Amateur Entomologists' Society www.amentsoc.org

British Dragonfly Society www.dragonflysoc.org.uk

Buglife www.buglife.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation www.butterfly-conservation.org

Chester Zoological Gardens www.chesterzoo.org

Countryside Council for Wales www.ccw.gov.uk

Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, University of Sheffield www.shef.ac.uk/aps

Environment Agency www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment and Heritage Service www.ehsni.gov.uk

Garden Organic www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Landlife www.landlife.org.uk

National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners www.nsalg.org.uk

National Trust www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk

Natural History Museum www.nhm.ac.uk

Notcutts Garden Centres Ltd www.notcutts.co.uk

People's Trust for Endangered Species www.ptes.org

Plantlife www.plantlife.org.uk

Pond Conservation www.pondconservation.org.uk

Royal Entomological Society www.royensoc.co.uk

Royal Horticultural Society www.rhs.org.uk

RSPB www.rspb.org.uk

The Herpetological Conservation Trust www.herpconstrust.org.uk

The Wildlife Trusts www.wildlifetrusts.org

Wiggly Wiggles www.wigglywiggles.co.uk

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust www.wwt.org.uk

Woodland Trust www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Zoological Society of London www.zsl.org

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