HERMITAGE PARK

KCS DEVELOPMENTS LTD



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HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO WILDLIFE

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME!

THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NEW HOME AND GARDEN, WITH WILDLIFE IN MIND. WE'VE INCLUDED HOW BEST TO ATTRACT LOCAL WILDLIFE TO YOUR GARDEN, AND HOW TO HELP IT THRIVE IN THE NEW HERMITAGE PARK DEVELOPMENT.

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LEPTON GREAT WOOD

You're lucky enough to have Lepton Great Wood, an ancient woodland, on your doorstep! Woodlands and forests are such important ecosystems for both plants and wildlife, they provide a home for large deer down to bats, insects and birds, and hundreds of plant species. If you visit Lepton Great Wood in the spring look out for the swathe of bluebells which carpet the forest floor!

Woodlands are an amazing space to enjoy and with a few easy guidelines we can make sure that they will flourish for hundreds more years to come.



Adam Jones, Unsplash



THINGS TO AVOID!

Don't leave litter, either take it home with you or place it in the bins provided.

Don't feed any livestock or wildlife. Human food can make them very ill, and Lepton Great Wood provides all the food they need anyway.

Keep the BBQs at home please! Open fires and BBQs present a huge fire risk, especially in the dry summer months.

No wild camping please!

THINGS TO DO!

Enjoy the woodland! This is great space for the whole family to get out in nature. Walk, run, cycle or take a picnic, getting outside benefits both our mental and physical health.

Pick up any dog waste and place it in the bins provided, or take it home with you.

Always keep your dog under control. This keeps your dog safe, as well as other woodland users and livestock.

Stick to the paths! This prevents damage to important plants and wildlife in the wood. It may be tempting to walk through the bluebells but take your photos from the footpath please so the flowers can be enjoyed by others.


Maurice Engelen, Pexels

BIRD BOXES

A great way to attract birds to your garden in the spring is to provide a safe place to nest. Your home may already possess bird or bat boxes built into the brickwork, designed to attract species such as swift, which is in national decline and in need of help.

Building and erecting your own box, or purchasing one from the RSPB or a garden centre may also help other species that are in decline, such as house sparrow or starling, and of course, many boxes attract blue tits and great tits to your garden . If you'd like to build your own, we've included links to instructions on how to build a basic tit box in our Useful Links section at the end of this leaflet. Once you are ready to erect your nest box, choose a location out of direct sunshine and heavy wind, ideally facing between north and east, and place it at a height of 2-3 metres above the ground.

REMEMBER!
Clean out your nest box in the autumn to prevent the transmission of pests!

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Phil Hearing, Unsplash

PONDS

Ponds are one of the best ways to attract wildlife to your garden and encourage a diverse range of species. From frogs and newts, who use them to breed in, to birds, who use them to drink and bathe in. There are several important things to remember when planning and building your pond:

- Create a sloping slide, or place a ramp in the water, so animals can get in and out easily.
- Plant native plants around the edges and inside the pond.
- Place log or rock piles around the edge to provide shelter and habitat for animals.
- Don't place your pond in direct sunlight; partial shade is ideal.

If a pond is not feasible, or you don't have the space or capacity for a pond in your garden, why not consider a mini pond? This can be a simple as a large pot or container either dug into the ground or sat above ground. The same principles apply to your mini pond as its full-size counterpart. Make sure there is some kind of ramp to allow animals to safely enter and exit the water. Ensure there are some plants in and around the water's edge, to provide cover and food sources, and place the mini pond in a relatively sheltered area of your garden, to prevent it sitting in full sunlight.

BIRD FEEDERS

A very quick way to attract wildlife to your garden is to provide food sources. This is easily done with bird feeders. They are readily available from many online retailers, or in garden centres and pet shops. You also have the option of creating your own, using fat or suet as the food source.

There are a huge variety of feeders and food types available commercially; it can be a little overwhelming! If you are just starting out, keep to a simple seed mix or peanuts, which can be placed in basic plastic or metal feeders. Place peanuts in a rigid mesh feeder to ensure only manageable pieces can be swallowed by small birds and their chicks. Sunflower hearts or nyger seed can be very popular with finches, such as gold finches and siskins. You can also make your own feeders using fat and seeds. This mixture can be pushed into half coconuts, into the gaps on pinecones, or even into household plastic recycling such as yoghurt pots. Once hung up in the garden, these feeders are a great way to attract birds such as house sparrows and tits.

Placement of your feeders is important. Try to place them close to cover, such as near a tree, but not too dense to dense ground cover, where the birds cannot be easily predated – especially by resident cats! Food can be provided year-round; resources can become scarce at any time. During the spring and summer, birds need lots of food to feed their chicks, and in winter natural food sources are more limited. Don't be tempted to overfill your feeders, it's best to put a small amount in and top up when necessary. This will stop you attracting pests and avoids the risk of old food going mouldy. Remember to clean your feeders regularly, to prevent the spread of diseases such as trichomononsis, which has affected large numbers of greenfinches in recent years, and always thoroughly wash your hands afterwards.

Don't forget to provide water as well. A shallow water dish or bird bath can be used for both drinking and bathing. Just make sure that the water is kept clean, and not placed too close to dense cover.



John Thorne, Pexels



Peter Steele, Pexels



Kiril Gruev, Pexels

HEDGEHOGS



Ralph, Pexels



Boys in Bristol, Pexels



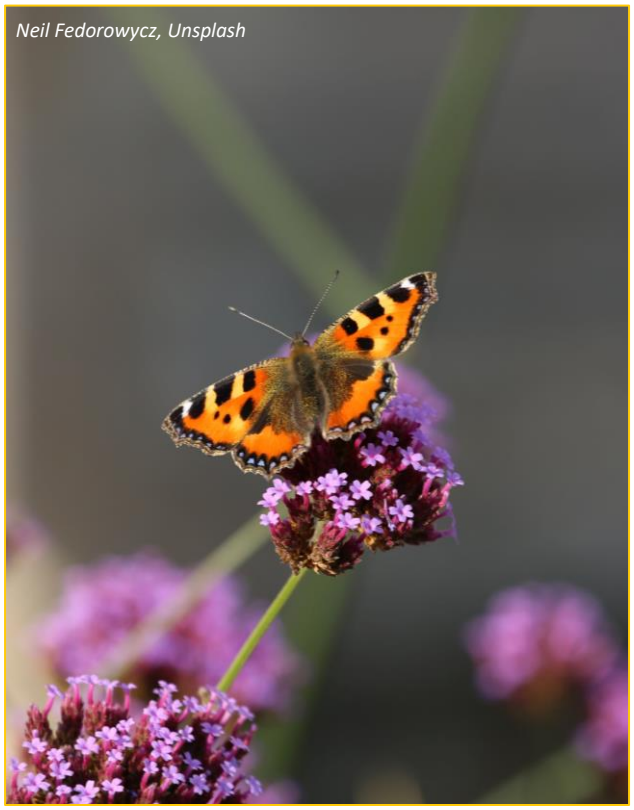
Hedgehogs, despite being one of the UK's best-loved native species, are showing serious population declines. Due to a loss of natural spaces, these animals are depending more and more on urban and suburban environments, and there is a lot we can do to encourage them into our gardens. Building a hedgehog house can provide a safe shelter and sleeping place for these nocturnal creatures. See the links section at the end of this leaflet for details on how to build one. It's important to place the house in a quiet part of the garden, out of direct sunlight and rain, ideally within dense cover. Remember to give it a clean out once a year to prevent parasites (late March to early April is the best time for this, to ensure you don't disturb any hibernating hedgehogs!). If building a hedgehog house is not feasible, a log pile is a fantastic way to encourage hedgehogs into your garden. Not only does this provide a safe sleeping place for them, it also attracts lots of different insects that they feed upon.

Hedgehogs can travel up to 2km a night searching for food. Unfortunately, areas of development can obstruct these pathways and thus make it difficult for them to find enough food. Fortunately, this is easy to fix. Simply help by ensuring there are hedgehog highways in and out of your garden. A small hole (15cm high by 15cm wide) cut into the bottom of your garden fence is sufficient and will be too small for any pets to escape from. You can register your hedgehog highway at www.hedgehogstreet.org.uk.

Once you know hedgehogs are visiting your garden, you can help them out by offering them food and water. Place water in a shallow dish on the ground, especially in particularly hot or dry weather. If you would like to feed them, a high-quality meat-based dog or cat food is suitable, or many pet shops stock hedgehog specific food. Bread and milk are not suitable, since hedgehogs are lactose intolerant, and this could make them very sick.

REMEMBER!

Don't use slug repellent, this is toxic to hedgehogs if they ingest it directly or via the slugs they regularly eat!


Neil Fedorowycz, Unsplash


Erik Karits, Pexels



WILDLIFE FRIENDLY PLANTING

There are many ways you can create a wildlife friendly garden through your choice of planting. Planting your garden with wildlife in mind provides both shelter and food to a wide range of species.

Wildflowers are a great place to start. Native flower seed mixes are available from most garden centres and online. Look for seed mixes containing cowslips, foxgloves, toadflax or harebells. You can also find wildflowers available in plug form and in ready to roll out turf. You can start small; create a mini meadow! This can be as small as one flowerpot, and still be a fantastic nectar resource for a range of insects, including bumblebees and butterflies. If you have the space for a lawn, a great option is to let the lawn grow long, or plant wildflower seeds in the bare soil. Try to hold off mowing a chosen patch or corner of your lawn until it reaches at height 20cm, which may only be once or twice a year, the fewer cuts the better! Have a look at the Useful Links section for more information on initiatives such as “No Mow May” and “Get Britain Buzzing” for more tips on how to attract and encourage insects into your garden.

A great place to put these cuttings would be a compost heap. Not only do compost heaps provide an eco-friendly solution to your garden and kitchen waste disposal, they provide a fantastic home for wildlife. As plant matter decomposes it gives off heat, making your compost heap a lovely warm home for animals such as grass snakes, which are known to lay their eggs in compost heaps. If you’ve also got a pond, you may see your resident grass snakes using that area of the garden as well.

If you are pushed for space, another option is to create a vertical plant wall. Specialized designs are available online, or this can be created using old pallets. Not only is this a great use of space, but it will also help reduce noise pollution compared to a regular wooden fence.

Planting trees and shrubs would also be a great addition to your wildlife garden. Even small gardens can accommodate native trees and shrubs if you select the right species, and many grow happily in pots. If you’re pushed for space have a look at planting species such as holly, rowan, and crab apple varieties.

BUG HOTELS

Let's not forget about the smallest visitors to our gardens: insects! These are vital to our garden ecosystems, and by ensuring our gardens support a wide range of insect species, we can attract more and more species higher up the food chain. The first step to attract insects has been outlined above, through careful and selective planting. A great additional way to support these insects is to provide shelter. The aim of these insect shelters (often referred to as "bug hotels") is to provide safe nooks and crannies to shelter in, especially during the harsh winter months. For example, the majority of UK bee species live a solitary life, not in the classic hive system we might assume. During the winter it is important that the queen bee finds a safe place to hibernate, so she can emerge next spring healthy and ready to find a mate. Other species you'll be likely to find in your bug hotel include: ladybirds, wasps, woodlice and lacewings.

Building a bug hotel can be as simple as tying a bundle of bamboo canes and sticks together and placing it in a sheltered area of your garden. These bundled sticks provide plenty of nooks for small insects to crawl between. You can make your bug hotel as extravagant as you want! Old bricks, logs, pallets, and wood with holes drilled into it are all great materials to construct your shelter with.



Tania Malrechauffe, Unsplash



Seema Miah, Unsplash

USEFUL LINKS

Build Hedgehog Houses, Nest Boxes and Bug Hotels:

www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/actvities

www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/

Wildlife Friendly Gardening:

www.rhs.org.uk/garden-design/design-withplants

No Mow May:

No Mow May (plantlife.org.uk)

Get Britain Buzzing:

https://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns/get-britain-buzzing-2

