

## Wildlife in a fruit & vegetable garden



### ***Gardens are very important for wildlife***

Frogs, song thrushes, hedgehogs and bees are now more common in gardens than the countryside. This trend is increasing for all sorts of wildlife, and so gardens are their haven in towns and cities.

Gardens also connect green spaces where you find lots of wildlife, such as parks, cemeteries and riverbanks. With the spread of urban areas, it is more important than ever to use gardens to support this biodiversity.

### ***What makes a good garden for wildlife?***

- A wide variety of plants e.g. lawn, flowerbeds, shrubs and trees
- Flowers growing throughout the year e.g. snowdrops and crocuses in the spring, ivy and viburnums in the autumn and winter in addition to summer flowers (this will provide nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies)
- Plants with a long flowering period (especially in small gardens) such as lavender and wild strawberries
- Ponds
- Compost heaps and dead wood
- Hedges and long grass
- Dry stone walls

### ***What is bad for wildlife?***

- Lots of hard surfaces e.g. decking, paving
- Tidiness
- Pesticides

### ***Garden sustainably***

This will help to protect wildlife and the wider environment

- Use chemicals only as a last resort
- Avoid peat
- Choose wood from sustainable sources
- Recycle all you can
- Save water by using a water butt



## Wildlife-friendly pest & disease control



In a wildlife-friendly garden 'prevention is better than cure'

### 1. *Look after your soil*

- Healthy soil = healthy plants, so use plenty of compost or manure.
- Avoid high nitrogen fertilisers – they encourage 'lush growth', making them vulnerable to attack by predators.

### 2. *Choose pest and disease resistant varieties*

- e.g. 'Remarka' and 'Sarpo' are blight resistant potatoes.

### 3. *Practice crop rotation*

- Don't grow the same crop in the same space year after year, this will help to prevent pests and diseases building up in the soil.
- Some crops reduce soil nutrients e.g. potatoes and cabbages, whereas others build them up e.g. peas and beans, so try to alternate these crops.

### 4. *Learn about pests and natural ways to control them*

- Pick off slugs and squash aphids.
- Use traps and barriers such as fine mesh and fleece to protect crops.

### 5. *Attract beneficial predators*

- Flowers like Californian poppies and marigolds planted amongst your vegetables will attract insects like ladybirds and hoverflies which will gobble up your aphids.
- Feed the birds and install boxes for solitary bees so they'll eat up pests.

### 6. *Good hygiene*

- Remove diseased plants and branches, washing your tools afterwards.
- Always scrub out your pots.
- Maximising air circulation between plants will help to control fungal diseases.
- Check your plants regularly so pest and diseases don't become a big problem.

### 7. *Companion planting*

- Some gardeners believe that certain plants attract insects away from crops or deter them altogether e.g. planting marigolds to reduce eel worms.

### *Top tips*

- Leave a few carrots and cabbages to flower, aphid-eating hoverflies love them.
- Coarse bark or sharp gravel around the veg beds helps to deter slugs and snails.
- Herbs like borage, sage and mint are very popular with beneficial insects.
- Protect hedgehogs and blackbirds by avoiding slug pellets.

