

# Allotments

Allotments are valuable habitats for wildlife, as they are often diverse, potentially consisting of hedgerows, grassland, scrub, ponds, trees etc.

- Hedgerows act as wildlife corridors and can join up surrounding greenspaces, including parks, gardens and churchyards.
- Grass margins (about two metres) are an important feature on allotments; they can provide shelter for small mammals and invertebrates.
- Leaving deadwood and creating compost heaps can also make important habitat, particularly for invertebrates such as beetles, centipedes and earthworms.
- Creating nest boxes for bats, birds, hedgehogs and bug hotels are all beneficial, as well as leaving stones and logs in situ.

Ponds are one of the most important habitats in “wildlife gardens” to encourage wildlife (see the guidance leaflet elsewhere in this series on **Ponds and SUDS** for further information ).

**It is vital that chemicals including fertilisers and pesticides are not used, as they can be very detrimental to wildlife.**

The [National Allotment Society](#) has a valuable web-page of guidance on [tips for a wildlife-friendly allotment](#).

Managing allotments as if they are wildlife gardens is an effective technique. The [Wildlife Gardening Forum](#) provides lots of useful guidance; as does the project between the RHS and the Wildlife Trusts called [Wild about Gardens](#). The Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust has a project called [Grow Wild](#), providing advice, guidance and resources to help make school grounds more wildlife-friendly.

## Threats

- Overcutting means wildflowers are not able to grow or growth is inhibited. There is no shelter for animals, as vegetation is kept short, uniform and open.
- Undercutting could result in the site becoming overgrown, often with thick scrub dominating large areas and reducing diversity.
- Chemicals used by plot owners to encourage the growth of allotment vegetables will have a detrimental effect on wildlife.
- Conflict between allotment owners and wildlife can occur if plot owners feel threatened by the idea of introducing and encouraging wildlife. What if my plants, fruit and vegetables get eaten?

## Allotments: Benefits to the Council

- Engaging with local people by encouraging wildlife-friendly practices helps to develop stronger relationships between the Council and the public, potential for more support.
- Encouraging biodiversity in these “wildlife gardens” provides an opportunity for the Council to meet their environmental targets.
- Ready-made wildlife friendly sites will save time and money.
- Allotments are aesthetically pleasing; they improve the look of an area and could potentially encourage more visitors.

## What you can do

- Organise volunteer groups to manage plots of land for wildlife.
- Ensure there are allotments available which can be used for wildlife friendly management.
- Encourage plot owners to responsibly manage their land for wildlife e.g. there must be some control over vegetation growing wild.
- Educate local communities to encourage group involvement.
- Encourage plot owners to go “chemical free”.
- Plant nectar rich flowers for pollinators.
- Create wildlife habitats:
  - > Bird and bat boxes
  - > Bee boxes and bug hotels
  - > Hedgehog houses
  - > Compost heaps, deadwood, stones and log piles
  - > Small ponds, with shelves and shelter around the waterbody, overhanging plants, rocks etc.

## Legislation

### **The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908**

This covers “the Provision of Allotments, Powers of Councils and Acquisition of Land”.

### **The Allotments Act 1925**

“This specifies that land purchased or appropriated by local authorities for use as allotments must not be disposed of without Ministerial consent. The Secretary of State must be satisfied that ‘adequate provision will be made for allotment holders displaced by the action of the local authority, or that such provision is unnecessary or not reasonably practicable”.

## Further reading and advice

### **Guidance from The National Allotment Society**

[www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/wildlife-gardening-on-allotments/](http://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/wildlife-gardening-on-allotments/)

### **Guidance from Natural England**

[https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/wildlife\\_on\\_allotments1-Natural-England1.pdf](https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/wildlife_on_allotments1-Natural-England1.pdf) -

### **Legislation**

<http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/legislation.htm>