

Tomorrow's Garden for Wildlife

increase biodiversity in your garden

What is Biodiversity?

Biological Diversity, or 'Biodiversity' is defined as the richness of the natural world - the variety of plants and animals, together with the soils, rocks and water on which they depend.

Species depend on one another for survival and this 'web of life' supports the very existence of humans on earth.

For example, plants need insects for pollination, plants provide the oxygen animals need; and animals eat plants and other animals.

Biodiversity influences all aspects of our lives. From it we obtain our food, fuel, medicines, cosmetics and construction materials.

Biodiversity also provides and enhances the places where we live, relax and exercise, in both the countryside and the town.



How can you increase biodiversity in your garden?



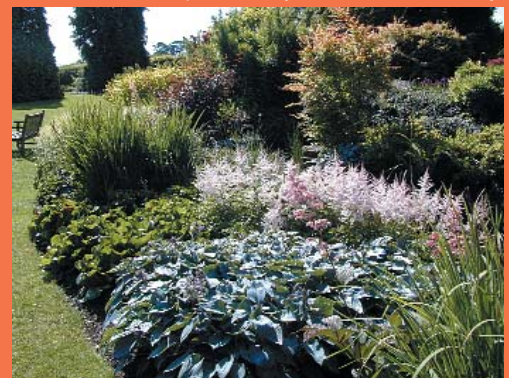
Most gardens already have a lot of wildlife in them. This leaflet provides some ideas for increasing biodiversity in your garden by encouraging butterflies and song thrushes, and also gives some ideas for using compost.

There are lots of ways of encouraging wildlife in your garden without having to have an unkempt lawn and borders full of 'weeds'. Check out the back page for further information.

photos: Royal Horticultural Society



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Garden Plants for Butterflies

Honesty (Chris Gibson, English Nature)

Butterflies are some of the most visible and attractive insects in the garden. Many British butterfly species are in decline, mostly due to habitat loss in the wider countryside. Gardens can be an important resource for many butterflies, in particular a mass of summer flowers can be a great feeding site.

Adult butterflies feed on nectar, the sugary liquid produced in flowers to attract pollinating insects. To feed butterflies aim for a succession of flowers, from early spring to late autumn. The greatest numbers of butterflies are in flight in late summer, so this is when you want most flowers in bloom.

Butterflies like to stand on flowers and probe for nectar with their long proboscis. They like flat flowers they can easily stand on, and heads with many small flowers, so they can browse from one to another. Some modern hybrid flowers have less nectar, or if they have multiple petals they are difficult for butterflies to access, so avoid these if you can. Most old-fashioned "cottage garden" varieties are ideal.



Here are some of the best flowers for butterflies



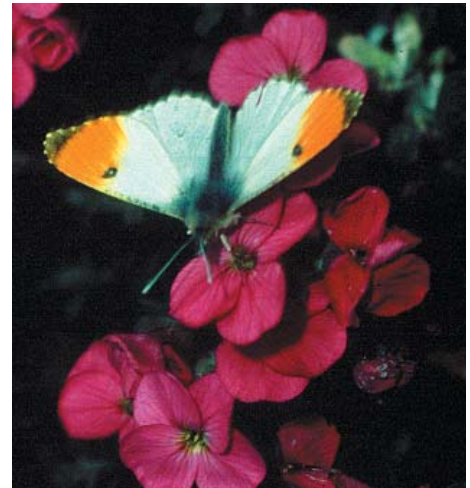
Catmint

(Chris Gibson, English Nature)

Spring

Aubretia
Honesty
Primrose
Sweet rocket
Wallflower
Candytuft

Aubretia deltoidea
Lunaria annua
Primula vulgaris
Hesperis matronalis
Erysimum cheiri
Iberis sempervirens



Orange tip (Butterfly Conservation)



Large white (J.J. Clarke)

Summer

Lavender
Buddleia
Red Valerian
Marjoram
Catmint
Verbena
Thyme
Scabious
Hebe

Lavandula angustifolia
Buddleja davidii
Centranthus ruber
Origanum vulgare
Nepeta x faassenii
Verbena bonariensis
Thymus vulgaris
Scabiosa var.
Hebe (summer-flowering variety)



Small tortoiseshell (Butterfly Conservation)

Autumn

Ice plant
Michaelmas daisy
Cone-flower
Rudbeckia
Goldenrod

Sedum spectabile
Aster novi-belgii
Echinacea purpurea
Rudbeckia
Solidago



Comma (J.J. Clarke)

Encouraging Song Thrushes to Your Garden

The song thrush, once a familiar bird in our countryside, is now red-listed by the UK Government as a bird of conservation concern.

Long term monitoring by the British Trust for Ornithology shows that the population has been in a major decline since 1970, particularly on farmland, but gardens still offer a good refuge for this species.

photo: Mike Roberts



What can you do to encourage song thrushes?

Ensure your garden contains varied habitats

Think carefully about using garden chemicals as these can harm wildlife

Provide appropriate wild bird food

Avoid cutting hedges and pruning shrubs and trees during the nesting season March to July inclusive

- * Trees and shrubs for nesting and song posts, out of reach of cats and other predators
- * Mown lawn for worms
- * Shady areas that harbour other natural food items such as slugs and snails
- * Fruit bearing shrubs and trees - yew, pyracantha, cotoneaster, holly, rowan
- * Patios and other hard surfaces provide somewhere for thrushes to use as an anvil to crack snails on
- * Water - a pond or bird bath



Using Compost in the Garden

Composting kitchen and garden waste will produce a free, environmentally friendly source of organic matter that can be used throughout the garden.

Before using, compost must be well matured, dark brown with a crumbly soil-like texture and a smell resembling damp woodland. It can be either used as a surface mulch or incorporated into the top 20cm of the soil.

photo: Royal Horticultural Society

Adding compost to the soil can help support soil life along with improving soil fertility and soil structure. Adding compost to light, sandy soils makes them able to hold on to more water, while heavy soils will drain more freely.

Applying 10 to 15cm of compost as a mulch to damp soil in spring helps in regulating soil temperature, keeping roots warm in winter and cool in summer, maintaining soil moisture, decreasing erosion and controlling weed germination.

Composting is the most sustainable way of disposing of garden and vegetable kitchen waste as it diverts organic refuse away from the dustbin and ultimately reduces landfill.



photos: Anne Brenchley, English Nature

Find out more about Biodiversity and Gardening

All areas of the UK now have Local Biodiversity Action Plans, known as LBAPs, which are full of ideas for things everyone can do to conserve endangered species and habitats in the local area. The Cheshire LBAP, known as the Countdown Programme, includes an Action Plan for Gardens and Allotments.

If you would like further information on the Countdown Programme please visit the web-site www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk,

or contact Fiona Mahon, Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DG, 01270 610180, fmahon@cheshire-wt.cix.co.uk



Other sources of information: Biodiversity

English Nature - www.english-nature.org.uk

Royal Horticultural Society - www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity

Chester Zoo - www.chesterzoo.org

Cheshire Wildlife Trust - www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cheshire

Butterfly Conservation - www.butterfly-conservation.org

rECOrd - www.record-lrc.co.uk

Garden Birds

RSPB - www.rspb.org.uk

British Trust for Ornithology - www.bto.org

CJ WildBird Foods - www.birdfood.co.uk

Gardening

Royal Horticultural Society - www.rhs.org.uk

RHS/Wildlife Trusts - www.wildaboutgardens.org

Henry Doubleday Research Association - www.hdra.org.uk

The Composting Association - www.compost.org.uk

The Wildlife Gardening web-site - www.wildlife-gardening.co.uk

National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens - www.nccpg.com

Reaseheath College - www.reaseheath.ac.uk

BBC - www.bbc.co.uk/gardening

Gardens and Allotments Biodiversity Action Group Partner Organisations



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If you have planted any of the garden plants for butterflies in your garden, or have other plants in your garden which attract butterflies, or use compost in your garden, or think that your garden is good for song thrushes - please tell us about it!

Contact Fiona Mahon, Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DG (01270 610180)

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