



# Wild About Gardens


#wildaboutgardens

Get creative  
for

# hedgehogs this autumn



Small steps everyone  
can take together to help  
save the hedgehog



Royal Horticultural Society  
Sharing the best in Gardening

Find out more information at  
[wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)



# How well do you know these spiny garden visitors?

## Home range & distribution

Hedgehogs are found across the UK, absent only from some Scottish islands. Gardens, hedgerows, woodlands, grasslands, parks and cemeteries are all important hedgehog habitats. Adult hedgehogs travel between 1-2km per night over home ranges as big as 10-20 hectares in size. In suburban areas, this means they range over entire housing estates and neighbourhoods.

## On the menu

Hedgehogs are most famous for eating slugs and snails, but they eat a huge range of other garden invertebrates too. In fact, beetles, earthworms and caterpillars make up most of their diet, whereas large snail shells can prove tricky for hedgehogs to tackle. If you want hedgehogs, you need creepy crawlies in abundance which can be attracted by planting a variety of different plants and creating habitats such as log piles.

*Hedgehogs must feed intensively and be in great condition before hibernating*



Callian Day

## Breeding

During the breeding season amorous hedgehogs can be seen (and heard!!) circling each other with snorts and grunts. Young are usually born from May onwards in litters of up to five and the young leave the nest after around four weeks. Baby hedgehogs (or hoglets) are born with their spines sheathed beneath their skin which then emerge a few hours after birth.

## Hibernation

While many animals have adapted to cope with the harsh conditions of winter, hedgehogs are one of only a handful of UK mammals to truly hibernate, along with bats and dormice. Depending on the weather and their body condition, they enter a state of torpor from October/November to March/April, lowering their body temperature and slowing their metabolism to save energy. Hedgehogs must feed intensively and be in great condition before hibernating if they are to have enough reserves to last the winter.

## Did you know...?

There are 14 different species of hedgehog around the world. The UK's hedgehog – the European hedgehog – is found across Western Europe and Scandinavia.

Particularly slippery slugs are sometimes de-slimed with deft forepaws before eating.

On average hedgehogs live for 2-5 years

in the wild, but some have lived up to 10!

An adult hedgehog has up to

7,000

spines and a small, hidden tail.

Hedgehogs are in trouble...

Over the past

50 years

we've seen declines in two thirds of the UK's plant and animal species, including many of our once common garden species.

Hedgehog numbers have fallen by

30 percent

in just over

10 years

and there are now thought to be fewer than

1 million

left in the UK.

They are disappearing from our countryside as fast as tigers are worldwide.

# How To Help: Welcoming the hedgehog

To save the hedgehog we need people to work together with neighbours to make small changes that will make a big difference. This is crucial because no garden or green space can help hedgehogs in isolation, but when they are linked together hedgehogs can thrive in any location.

## Create hedgehog highways

Hedgehogs need to be able to roam far and wide in search of food, mates and nesting sites. Get together with your neighbours to cut a **13cm x 13cm hole** (5in) hole in your fence or dig a channel beneath garden boundaries to connect your gardens. You can then add your hedgehog hole to our national network at [HedgehogStreet.org](http://HedgehogStreet.org).

## Avoid the use of pesticides

Ditch the slug pellets and avoid the use of pesticides. Hedgehogs are natural “pest” controllers and need a plentiful and varied supply of invertebrate prey to stay healthy.

## Make water safe

Hedgehogs are great swimmers but can sometimes struggle to climb out of steep-sided ponds and many drown. Provide a ramp from a plank wrapped in chicken wire or create shallow areas at the edge so they can scramble out.

## Provide nesting sites

Log and leaf piles, wilderness areas and purpose-built hedgehog homes make great places for hedgehogs to nest and hibernate. Fallen leaves also make the perfect nesting material, so make sure you don't clear all of these away.

## Grow a wide variety of plants

Attract plenty of natural hedgehog food by keeping your garden diverse with a wide variety of habitats e.g. ponds, log piles, hedges, and a wide range of plant types. Don't be afraid to let your grass grow a little wild and leave some leaf litter – as both are important homes for the hedgehog's prey.

## Be aware of dangers

Check for hidden hedgehogs before lighting bonfires, strimming and mowing the lawn. Keep plant netting, tennis nets and household rubbish above ground level to prevent entanglement.

*Log and leaf piles,  
wilderness areas and  
purpose-built hedgehog  
homes make great places  
for hedgehogs to nest*



David Cooper

## Check out the website:

**[hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org)**

You can map any hedgehogs you may see, tell us about the hole in your fence or become a Hedgehog Champion and get stuck in right away.

Living in an urban area needn't mean that you can't help the 'hog. Here are some top tips for getting involved:

✘ Post some invitations around your local neighbours to make them aware of what they can do to help. You could even throw a hedgehog-themed party to break the ice.

✘ If you live in a flat, try and influence the management of local greenspace by attending management meetings or joining the 'friends of' group.

✘ If you do have 'hogs in your garden, you could set up a feeding station by cutting a hole in a plastic storage box and weighing down the lid with bricks; this will stop cats and foxes taking the food.

✘ If you are worried about rats, don't put out grain-based foods on the floor. Take in any excess food when your hedgehogs have been for a visit.

✘ Keep an eye out for people doing work on their gardens, or using fencing contractors - this is a prime time to get a hedgehog hole put in and influence connectivity.

## What do I do if I find an underweight hedgehog?

✘ If you're concerned about underweight hedgehogs or hedgehogs active in winter, provide tinned cat or dog food and fresh water. The British Hedgehog Preservation Society can offer advice and help you find a rescue centre near you:

w. [britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://britishhedgehogs.org.uk)

e. [info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk](mailto:info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk)

t. 01584 890 801

## Key

1. Create 'hedgehog highways' in your fences to connect your gardens.
2. Provide an escape route out of ponds – 'hogs are great swimmers but they struggle to climb out.
3. Create a variety of habitats e.g. ponds, hedges, log piles and compost heaps to attract food for the hedgehog.
4. Build a hedgehog home – give them somewhere to hunker down for the winter.
5. Let your grass grow wild (or even a section of it) to encourage the hedgehog's prey. Check carefully before mowing or strimming areas.
6. Create nesting opportunities – leave wild areas for 'hogs to hibernate.
7. Set up a feeding station offering hedgehog food or meaty pet food and water.
8. Tidy up – litter harms wildlife, and hedgehogs can also become entangled in garden netting.
9. Keep domestic drains covered, hedgehogs can fall into them and get stuck.
10. Check bonfires before lighting; ideally rebuild them on the day it is to be lit.
11. Keep your gardens green – paving and decking over gardens reduces hedgehog habitat.

# Working together

Take these small steps to welcome hedgehogs into your neighbourhood.



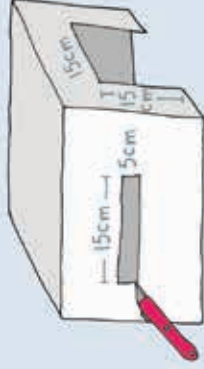
# Make a simple hedgehog house



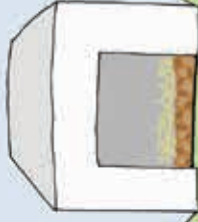
## You will need:

- Medium-sized plastic storage box
- Stanley knife
- Leaf litter
- Dry grass or straw
- Carrier bag
- Twigs and dry leaves

1 Cut two side air vents and an entrance into the plastic box.

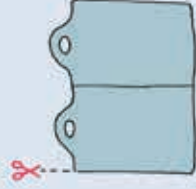


2 Put some leaf litter inside the box, with clean, dry grass or straw on top.



3 Tuck the box near a hedge (with the entrance facing south if possible).

4 Put an opened-up carrier bag over the top of the box, then cover with twigs, dry grass and leaves.



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Produced in collaboration with Hedgehog Street

# Make a deluxe hedgehog house

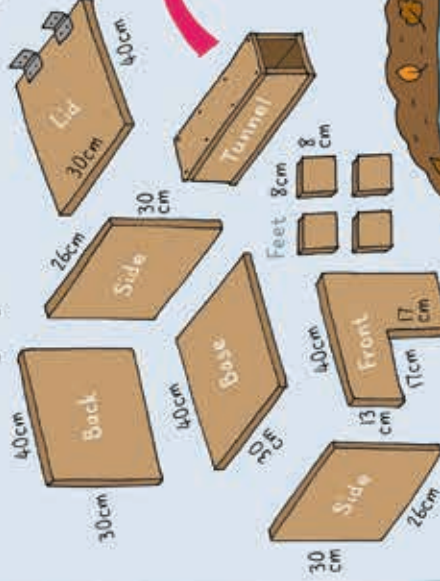


## You will need

- 20mm FSC plywood boards cut to the sizes shown
- Hammer and nails
- 2 metal hinges
- Soil
- Dry leaves
- Straw or dry grass
- Newspapers
- Polythene sheeting

Birch is ideal

1 Construct the hedgehog house from the following diagram and dimensions.



2 Put the newspaper and straw or dry grass inside, cover the house with polythene sheeting, then pack soil and dead leaves around the outside.

The roof is hinged so you can clean the box in future



Make sure the entrance tunnel faces south, and is kept clear at all times

Do not creosote or treat the wood

raised up on feet

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# Hedgehog Delicacies

Hedgehogs eat a variety of insects, molluscs and other invertebrates, often switching from one food type to the other depending on the time of year. How does your garden stack up as a hedgehog buffet?

Tick off the menu items you've seen



Earthworm



Leatherjacket  
(crane fly larva)



Earwig



Millipede



Caterpillar



Snail



Slug



Ground beetle



Beetle larva



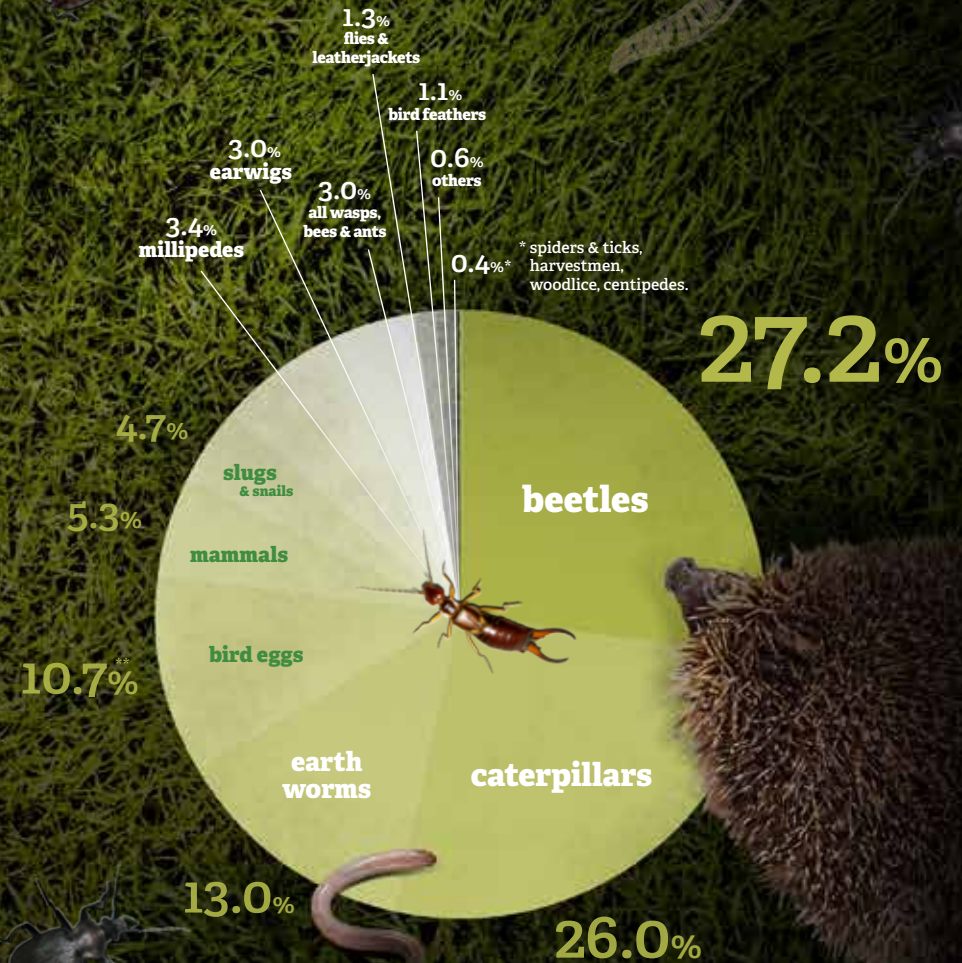
Chafer beetle



Weevil



Butterfly/  
moth pupa



Data from Yalden, D.W. (1976) The food of the hedgehog in England. Acta Theriologica 21: 401-424

\*\*study examined animals that were trapped by gamekeepers using eggs as bait, so the proportion of eggs in a natural diet is likely to be lower.

Image credits for p 10. Leatherjacket - RHS / P. Becker. Millipede - Joy Russell.

Caterpillar - Chris Maguire. Ground beetle - Margaret Holland. Beetle larva - RHS / Andrew Halstead.

Chafer beetle - David Longshaw. Weevil - Margaret Holland. Butterfly - Joyce Maynard.

# Gardening For Hedgehogs

Encourage a glut of the hedgehog's favourite food by creating micro-habitats that are great for invertebrates!

## 1 Choose plant species that are attractive to a range of insects

Have a look at the RHS Perfect for Pollinators list for suggestions: [rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators](https://rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators)

Oliver Kite



Tim Sandall

## 2 Mulch beds with garden compost

Encourages plenty of earthworms, woodlice and beetles as it begins to rot down!

2

3

## 3 Fallen leaf pile

Provides the perfect shelter for ground beetles.

Richard Dawson



6

## 6 'Build a bug hotel'

Stuff it with lots of straw and hollow plant stems and earwigs, centipedes and woodlice will soon make it their home.

8

## 8 Create nesting opportunities

Leave prunings and leaves in a wild corner for hedgehogs to make nests with. Hogs love apple and cherry leaves, and hawthorn and honeysuckle prunings make good structural supports.

Tom Marshall

Richard Dawson



## 4 Wood pile

Encourages a rich feast of earwigs, centipedes and woodlice!

Tim Sandall



5

## 5 Allow a patch of grass to grow long

Will harbour insects including leatherjackets.

P. Becker



7

## 7 Leave hollow plant stems over winter








The perfect hiding place for ladybirds!

Tom Marshall

# How to make an animal footprint trap



## You will need:

- old baking tray 
- long ruler 
- fine grain sand 
- water 
- low-sided dish 
- meaty cat or dog food 
- footprint ID guide 

1 Fill an old baking tray with damp sand and smooth out the surface with a ruler.



Check to make sure your fingers leave a mark.

3 Leave the trap overnight in a garden and check in the morning for footprints left by curious visitors.



2 Place hedgehog food or meaty cat or dog food in a low-sided dish in the middle of the tray.



(you could also try mealworms or chopped, unsalted peanuts)



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# Leave your garden wild



Take a day off today and do nothing! Leave a wild spot in your garden by not mowing the lawn, or not weeding the paving – nature will love it!



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# About Us

For more information about how you can help wildlife in your garden, including gardening advice, activity ideas and species guides, visit The Wildlife Trusts and RHS partnership website [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

## The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are the UK's largest people-powered organisation caring for all nature – rivers, bogs, meadows forests, seas and much more. There are Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK with a shared mission to restore nature everywhere we can and to inspire people to value and take action for nature.

Many Wildlife Trusts run projects to specifically address the disappearance of our hedgehogs, including raising awareness amongst local communities, recording sightings, encouraging people to take action at home to help and targeting hedgehog hotspots for conservation effort. Find out more about some of these projects and how you can get involved at [wildlifetrusts.org/hedgehogs](http://wildlifetrusts.org/hedgehogs)

The Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG24 1WT  
t: 01636 677711 e: [info@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:info@wildlifetrusts.org)  
w: [wildlifetrusts.org](http://wildlifetrusts.org)



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## The Royal Horticultural Society

For more than 210 years the Royal Horticultural Society has been the force behind gardening in the UK. We're driven by a desire to enrich everyone's life through plants, and make the nation a greener, more beautiful place.

We believe that everyone in every village, town and city should benefit from growing plants to enhance lives, build stronger, healthier, happier communities, and create better places to live.

Our work in education, science and communities is only possible thanks to the generous support of our visitors, members, partners, donors and sponsors.

With your help we can harness the power of horticulture, one gardener at a time.

The Royal Horticultural Society,  
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t: 0845 260 5000 e: [membership@rhs.org.uk](mailto:membership@rhs.org.uk)  
w: [rhs.org.uk](http://rhs.org.uk)



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## Hedgehog Street

Hedgehog Street is a campaign by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) aimed at ensuring the hedgehog, the UK's only spiny mammal, remains a common and familiar part of British life. We know hedgehogs are in trouble. We've lost a third of all our hedgehogs in ten years.

Fortunately, hedgehogs love gardens, and there are around half a million hectares of garden in the UK. Hedgehogs need access to lots and lots of different gardens to survive, so this campaign is as much about getting people to cooperate as it is about gardening for wildlife. Hedgehog Street has over 34,000 volunteer "Hedgehog Champions" right across the UK. Wherever you live, the green space in your local area can be a vital refuge for hedgehogs.

Hedgehog Street, 3 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4BG  
t: 020 7498 4533 e: [hedgehog@ptes.org](mailto:hedgehog@ptes.org)  
w: [hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org)

Registered Charity No.s PTES 274206 / BHPS 326885



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