

# Gardening for Wildlife

---

*No knowledge  
required*



**DJA  
PLANTS**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Welcome to our guide for Gardening for Wildlife.....	3
Balance .....	4
Attraction .....	4
Variety .....	5
Choose your Flowers Wisely.....	5
The Importance of Water.....	5
Bug Hotels and Other Accommodation .	6
Unused Places .....	7
Plants .....	7
Grass or No grass .....	8
Undesirables .....	8
Pesticides.....	9
Design.....	9
Style .....	9



## Welcome to our guide for Gardening for Wildlife

**Our step by step guide will give you all of the information you need to take your garden from an empty quiet space into a place full of life, movement and natural sounds.**

We are creating this because we have done this ourselves. I love gardening, especially for wildlife. We moved into a house that had wall to wall grass a few overgrown shrubs and a lot of paving slabs. Whilst we were surrounded by trees and green space very little wildlife ventured into our garden. Over 2 years we turned it from a dull and drab uninviting space into a haven for wildlife and a paradise to relax. And what's better is we can show you how to do it without costing a fortune to your bank account or the planet.



We want to encourage everyone to think of their gardens as an extension of a home for Wildlife. In the UK, gardens make up a large proportion of habitats for many UK native species including hedgehogs, birds, frogs, toads, newts, butterflies, bubble bees, hoverflies and spiders just to mention a few.

At DJA plants we have lots of interesting ideas to help your garden stand out from the rest and look forward to sharing those with you as we grow.



## Balance

Gardening for wildlife is my absolute passion. I am a firm believer that life is all about balance. If you get the balance right life becomes simpler (that's probably a good life philosophy in general). If you want to embrace wildlife gardening you need to look at the slugs and greenfly and not immediately think how can I eradicate this pest, but think who will benefit from this insect being here. This means sometimes I have curled up and chomped leaves, I don't reach for the pesticide, I wait, the ladybirds, blue tits, blackbirds and hedgehogs all arrive (eventually) and help to take control. I hate seeing plants being attacked but I love watching nature do its thing in my garden, harmoniously and without my interaction. If a plant can't hold its own then it doesn't get a space in my garden.

## Attraction

A popular question I see all of the time is, how do I get birds in my garden?

The answer is not as simple as put up feeders with sunflower seed.

Yes, this attracts some birds but if you really want the wildlife to hang around your garden you need to supply them with the overall



package. Somewhere to live, hide, feed, bath, drink and above all a safe place from predators such as cats and birds of prey. Shrubs, trees, hedges will be the foundation of your garden and you have to be willing and able to let these grow a little wild. I don't have a huge garden, I then filled half of it with greenhouses. I manage my hedges and shrubs by cutting back in stages. A wildlife garden is not for the tidy gardener, wildlife doesn't like tidy! It likes chaos which makes me happy as my life is never perfect and tidy, there is always a corner of chaos somewhere. One year I will cut back half of the Ivy and the next year the other half. This enables the wildlife sharing my patch to adjust without too much upheaval.



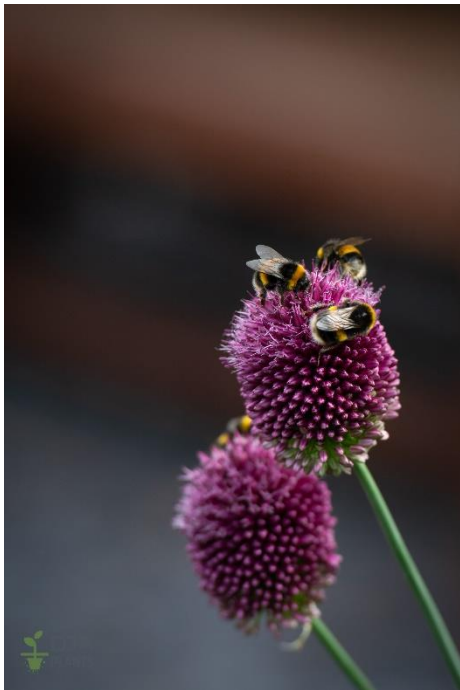
# DJA PLANTS

## Variety

I have found that by planting a variety of small trees, herbaceous plants and shrubs and by letting the Ivy grow a little more imposing the wildlife has flourished. The simple act of widening the border in front of our patio doors has encouraged birds such as Dunnocks and Wrens to forage in the soil in full view from our dining room table.

My answer to encouraging birds into your garden is to create deep borders and fill them with a variety of plants including native flowers for the bumble bees and hoverflies. Plant shrubs and bushes which produce flowers and then berries against the boundary for birds to hide and forage. Keep the grass trimmed but not too short, we cut ours in stages as we like to see the daisies and dandelions flowering and the birds and insects really benefit from this too. The pigeons can often be seen picking at the grass, presumably taking the leaves of some plant growing within.

## Choose your Flowers Wisely



I choose plants to have single flowers and those which are grown locally, peat free and without the use of pesticide. I want to enable the bees to access the pollen and nectar without fear and where possible I use native plants, but not always. A nice mix of what you really love with what the wildlife really loves makes a perfect compromise. I found that the year I grew teasel (which reached 10 foot and flopped everywhere) we had a large outbreak of aphids on them followed by the largest number of ladybirds I have ever seen in my garden the blue tits were in their element. Not to mention that the Teasel flowers were constantly covered in bumble bees and even the Gold Finches came and had a nibble at the seed heads and whilst I haven't grown teasel again this year (as it was a bit of a problem) I will be trialing it in different areas over the next few years to see if we can come up with a solution to suit all.

## The Importance of Water

The next big need for wildlife is water. We have had some really hot and dry springs and summers (and even autumn and winter recently has been dry) and without water not a thing can survive. I have a small pond with rocks and stones placed in it for landing spots and to aid getting out should an animal fall in and I have various water stations in the form of bird baths and seed trays filled with water around the garden. These are continuously utilized by birds to drink and bathe in. It is important to place them in areas where there is cover for escape if



# DJA PLANTS

needed. It is really important that you clean your bird bath and feeders regularly with hot soapy water or disinfectant (to prevent spread and disease) and ensure that they are topped up with clean fresh water. The birds will begin to rely on your food and water and you don't want them to waste energy getting to your garden only to find there is none.

## Bug Hotels and Other Accommodation

Think about creating a bug hotel so that insects have somewhere to hibernate over winter.

Create log piles and forgotten piles of stones in an unused corner of your garden. Incorporate a hedgehog house in the bottom of a homemade seat somewhere. Even wasps are welcome visitor, yes they strip the wood from your fence to build a nest and at the end of summer they may pester you for food but they play an invaluable role in keeping our vegetables free from caterpillars that would otherwise chomp through your cabbage leaving you with non for the winter. Ensure your bug hotel has lots of different types of spaces for different insects such as hollow bamboo, straw, leaf litter, bits of brick and stone, sticks, wood, pine cones. Try to make sure all of the material you use is dry and brown (ie not green leaves) before placing inside the bug hotel to help reduce problems with things rotting and going moldy.

If you have a pond don't forget to make a frog/toad abode so they too have somewhere to live over winter. Ideally this will be a space dug underground and filled with logs and stones so that they have a little maze of crevasses to explore.

Bird nest boxes need to be located at the correct height for the species that you wish to attract. Ensure that they are placed on the north or east side so that they receive some shelter from the strongest sun. For tits place your box 2 – 4 meters high, House sparrows and starlings will happily nest high up under the eaves of the house. Robins and wrens prefer to be lower than 2 meters in densely sheltered vegetation.

If you are lucky enough to get bats (and many urban homes near open water do) why not consider putting up a bat box. This can be placed under the eaves of your house or ideally a mature tree. It needs to be at least 3 meters from the ground and exposed to sun for part of the day but sheltered from strong winds.





## Unused Places

Don't forget you probably have many unused corners and crevasses in your garden that you could turn into little habitats for wildlife. Explore those areas you don't frequently visit, such as behind the garden shed or bottom of the garden and consider how you could make a space for life there.

## Plants

Choose plants that flower for as long a period as possible, are native to your location and will provide fruit for the visiting birds once pollinated by the bees.

### Plants that I highly recommend are:

#### For Bees and Butterflies

Allium

Echium vulgar

Geum

Verbena

Lavender

Borage

Eryngium (Sea holly)

Digitalis (Foxglove)

Rudbeckia

Helianthus

Pieris

Crocus

Echinops (Globe Thistle)

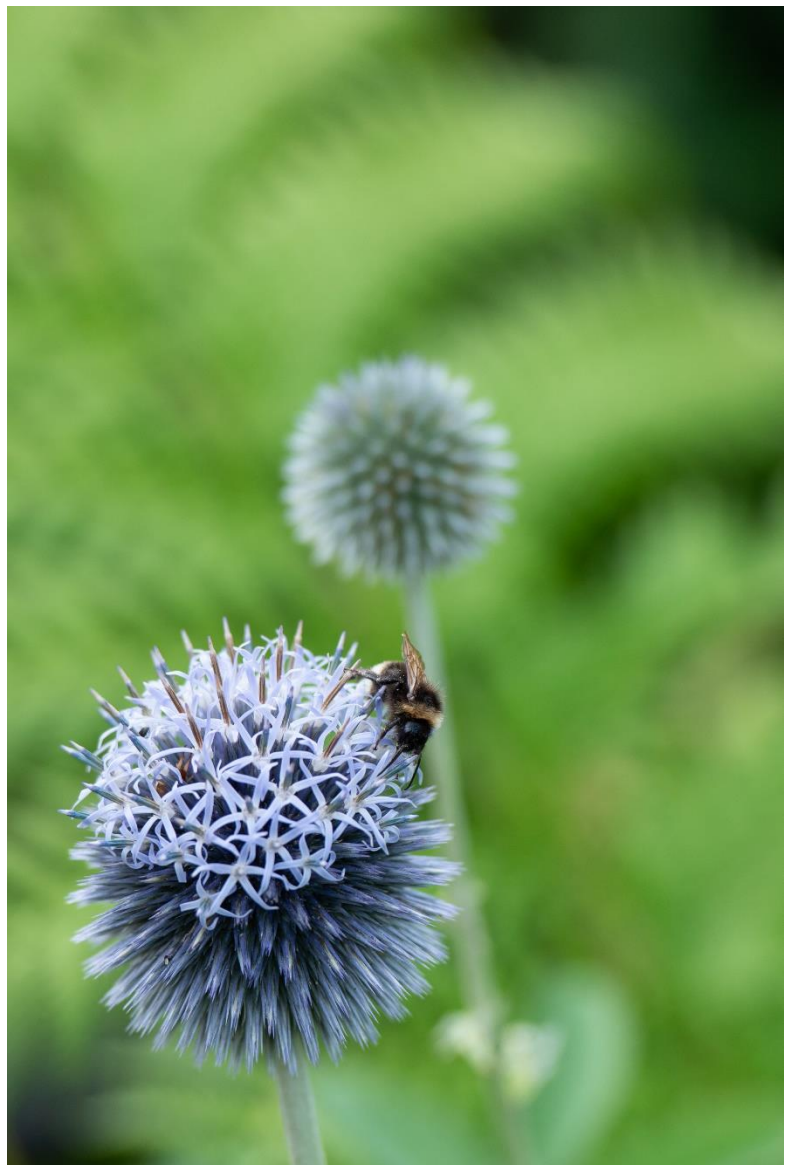
Buddleia

Echinacea

Lonicera (Honey Suckle)

Sedum

Bluebells





## For Bees, Butterflies and Birds

Cottoneaster

Ivy

Mahonia

Sunflower

Teasel

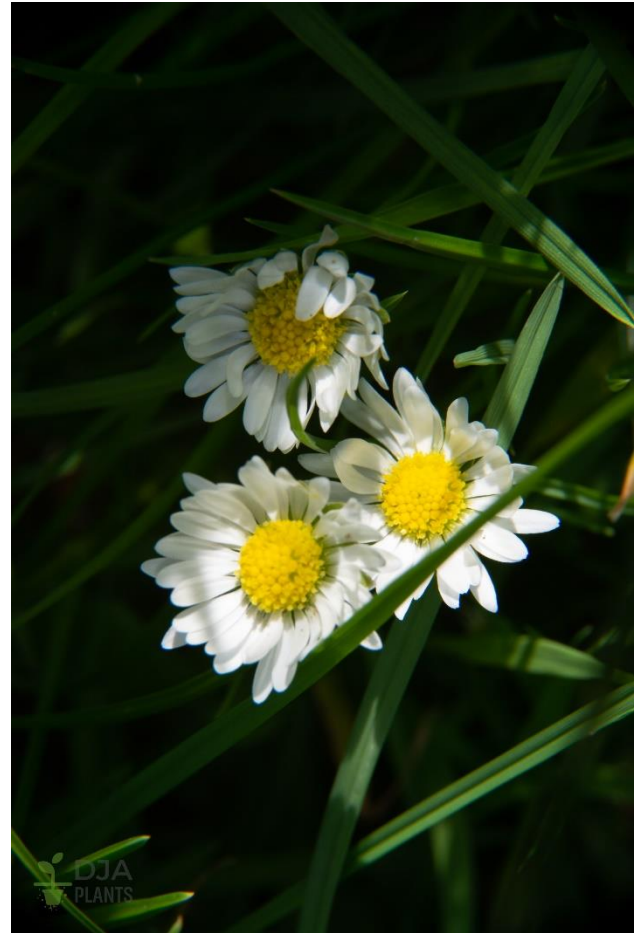
Holly

Pyracantha

Hawthorn

## Grass or No grass

Grass plays an important role for many insects, however a perfectly manicured lawn is the same as a desert for many insects and birds. A lawn is a manmade monoculture (single species) which very often is devoid of life. Some birds may dig around for worms but trust me when I say they have far more fun and luck finding food flinging bark off your flower beds.



If you don't feel like you can garden with out a lawn then my advice is to reduce the size of your lawn or don't keep it so perfectly manicured. Allowing one part to grow long and keep another area short. Ideally go the whole hog and embrace wild flowers.

## Undesirables

We have tolerance for some wildlife but not for others. Some animals are just so darn successful that they seem to take over so what should we do if rats or pigeons start to gather in our gardens?

Generally, these animals are opportunists and have arrived because of the supplementary feeding that you are doing. The recommendation is that you stop feeding seed or find a solution that means that the undesirables cannot get to the food. This may involve purchasing bird feeders that have cages around them to stop the pigeons reaching the food inside and plates that fit underneath to stop the food from falling to the floor. Also remember to move them away from shrubs or trees as rats will climb to reach the food too. Once the food is no longer in supply they will move on.





## Pesticides

When you buy your plants ask the seller if they are bee friendly and if they use pesticides. Pesticides containing neonicotinoids will poison bees through the flowers even if they weren't in flower when the pesticide was applied as this kind of chemical stays in the system of the plant for a number of months. Many nurseries are staying clear of using harsh chemicals and using a more organic approach in the form of predator bugs which feed on the undesirable insects that would ordinarily kill your plant. Many garden center plants carry a symbol on the label telling you if it is bee friendly. To be confident that your plants are safe for bees and other garden guests visit your small independent growers and speak to them, they will be able to tell you exactly how they care for their plants as they are growing.

## Design

How did I choose the design of my garden I hear you ask! Well how to design your garden is a whole other topic and will be covered in a separate guide but to be brief: I considered how we currently used the garden and how we wanted to use the garden in the future. I went out armed with a tape measure and some bamboo canes and marked it out on the floor using the canes. I left the canes there for a few days to see if I liked the shapes from the window and how it all felt when I walked through the gaps and where the beds were. I'm a very visual and imaginative person so this worked for me. I did have a tiny sketch not to scale just roughly how I thought it would be and then I got to work building and digging.



## Style

When it comes to planting the birds really don't mind what theme you go for but they will be more inclined to visit if you have dense bushes and shrubs or herbaceous plants with lots of branches rather than lots of large leaved plants. Planting needs to be close and full, when I say full, I mean you need to dedicate space, a thin border with some colourful low growing annuals is nice but it just isn't sufficient to provide the cover needed for nesting and hiding. Think deep borders about a meter out from the fence line if you can. These can be in a wavy pattern so it doesn't look so imposing. Ideally dense shrubs and herbaceous plants and if you can add in some native plants or things that will flower and produce berries such as holly, Ivy, Hawthorn, Pyracantha or Mahonia these will attract a larger variety of birds to your garden. If you cater for birds in this way you will inevitably be catering for bees, butterflies and hoverflies too. Bees need single blooms and ideally native species. And if you can bear it they love nothing more than a lawn full of dandelions, daisies and buttercups.



# DJA PLANTS

**We hope that you have found this information useful and look forward to hearing your feedback, seeing your before and after photos and sending you further information about gardening with good intention.**

Please share your ideas for wildlife in your garden on our Facebook and Instagram Pages we love seeing other people's ideas.



**Written and Designed by: Jo Adderley**

**Photo Credits: DJA Adventures**

*Version 1*