

CREATING HEDGEHOG HABITATS



CLIMATE ACTION
for West Oxfordshire

MAKING A HOLE TO LET HEDGEHOGS IN YOUR GARDEN IS THE BEST FIRST STEP IN MAKING THEM FEEL AT HOME! SOME OF THE BEST WAYS TO MAKE YOUR SPACES MORE HEDGEHOG-FRIENDLY ARE OUTLINED BELOW...

1. SAFE GARDEN PASSAGES

Creating areas of dense, thick undergrowth by planting shrubs and hedges that grow close to the ground will make a hedgehog feel safe as it travels through a garden – it will be able to dart into the undergrowth if it spots any predators. These habitats will be particularly effective when placed near to your hedgehog hole.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

HEDGEHOGS WILL EAT A WIDE MIX OF INSECTS, INCLUDING BEETLES, WORMS, CATERpillars, AND SLUGS — THEY ARE A GREAT HELP AT CONTROLLING PESTS IN THE GARDEN. HEDGEHOGS WILL SOMETIMES USE THEIR PAWS TO DE-SLIME SLUGS BEFORE EATING THEM!



2. INSECT-FRIENDLY GARDENING

Hedgehogs will tend to visit places where they regularly find food – so encouraging the insects they eat is a great start to getting them in your garden. Creating a mini meadow or planting a variety of flowering plants will attract a range of insects that a hedgehog can eat. Avoid using pesticides on your plants, as this can reduce the number of insects as a whole in your garden, affecting more species than the ones you're wanting to get rid of. Hedgehogs act as great natural pest control!

TIME FOR A (RATHER LONG) NAP

HEDGEHOGS ARE ONE OF THE FEW UK MAMMALS THAT TRULY HIBERNATE OVER THE WINTER. THEY WILL CURL UP TO SLEEP IN A SAFE PLACE AND DROP THEIR BODY TEMPERATURE TO MATCH THEIR SURROUNDINGS. THIS ALLOWS THEM TO SAVE A LOT OF ENERGY BUT SLOWS DOWN ALL OTHER BODILY FUNCTIONS MAKING NORMAL ACTIVITY IMPOSSIBLE.



3. UNTIDY AREAS

Leaving areas of your garden overgrown and wild-looking creates safe places for hedgehogs to travel through. Insects for them to eat such as grasshoppers and beetles can also be found in long grassy areas.

4. COMPOST, LOG AND LEAF PILES

These three features all act as great places for hedgehogs to nest and hibernate. If you can, create these in a quiet corner of your garden in a place sheltered by dense vegetation, so hedgehogs will feel safe and undisturbed in these spaces. These features will also become home to slugs, snails and beetles, all of which will act as welcome snacks!

5. HEDGEHOG HOUSE

If you don't have space for a compost or leaf heap, then a hedgehog house can also act as a suitable spot to hibernate in. These can usually be bought from garden centres, or you can make your own using a plastic or cardboard box – find out how to make this [here](#). These are also best tucked in a quiet sheltered location.



6. PROVIDE SOME WATER

Ponds act as an excellent year-round water source in a garden, and will also attract insects and amphibians that they can eat. Make sure any ponds have sloping sides, or a small ramp to make sure any hedgehogs that fall in can climb out again. Alternatively, leaving out a small shallow dish of fresh water will work well.



PROTECTING HEDGEHOGS

- Avoid using slug pellets and other chemicals in your garden – not only will they reduce the amount of insect food for the hedgehogs, they are usually toxic for hedgehogs to eat.
- Check any overgrown areas carefully before mowing and strimming.
- If you are turning or taking material out of your compost heap or leaf pile, check its base before you dig any tools in, and go carefully to reduce the risk of hedgehog injury.
- If you have a dog, keep it inside at night to avoid hedgehog encounters.
- Make sure your wild areas are kept free of rubbish - inquisitive hedgehogs may try and eat or get trapped in litter.



Have any more questions about encouraging hedgehogs to your garden?
Email Climate.Action@westoxon.gov.uk and we can give you some further advice.