



# Big gains in small spaces

A garden that might seem small to us can be a huge space for wildlife. **Kate Bradbury** reveals how you can optimise your space for wildlife.

## Home sweet home

You don't need a large garden to hang a bee hotel, only a wall or fence. Erect bird boxes in the eaves for sparrows or swifts, or place a tit box 1-2m from the ground.

## Layer bulbs in pot

Layer alliums and crocus in the same pot. Crocuses flower in March, then the alliums will grow and the crocuses die down, creating food for bees for longer in the same pot.

## Grow climbing plants

Clothe every inch of your space with plants to provide shelter for insects. You might find night-flying moths resting here during the day!

## Feed the birds

Hanging feeders of sunflower hearts, mixed seed and fat balls can save the lives of birds in winter and also help in the breeding season.



Wildlife gardening needn't just be for those with large gardens. Any space, no matter how small, can be used to create habitats for wildlife. Put together, our gardens take up more land than all of our nature reserves combined. So you might not think your garden has much potential as a wildlife habitat, but taken as part of a much wider network of linked spaces, yours could be one small but vital piece in a vast jigsaw of connected habitats.

Small spaces add up for wildlife because they contribute to 'wildlife corridors', which enable wildlife to travel, often between other habitats. You might have a small garden close to a park. By digging holes beneath your fences on either side you will be creating a corridor for hedgehogs to reach the park, potentially opening up huge new spaces for them (especially if your neighbours do the same). You might grow a few flowering plants on a balcony. These could provide a stepping stone of nectar, enabling butterflies and other insects to travel greater distances in search of a mate. These

corridors are important because they enable wildlife to increase their populations and adapt more easily to climate change. Some species are already shifting in a northerly direction — if there are no corridors or stepping stones to help them on their way, they'll have less chance of surviving.


You can tailor your garden to meet your needs as much as those of wildlife. No room for a pond? Try a little container pond, instead. Worried trees will grow too big for your space? Consider shrubs such as hazel, guelder rose and spindle. You can grow plants that flower over a long period to provide as much nectar and pollen as possible, such as perennial wallflower, catmint and salvias. Even just letting the grass grow in one patch. Anything you do will make a difference.



**Kate Bradbury**

is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone and Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.

Gardens of all sizes can help save our struggling insects. Get a free guide to helping insects at home:

 [wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects](https://wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects)

### Add water

Container ponds and birdbaths are great for bringing wildlife into small spaces.

### Wild highways

Hedges shelter wildlife and offer access to your garden, but if you have fences, a hole in, or beneath, them on either side provides a lifeline to mammals and amphibians.

### Grow caterpillar food plants

Even small gardens have room for a few caterpillar foodplants. Try foxglove, primrose, hops, honeysuckle and red campion, or nettles in larger spaces.

### Let long grass grow

Even the smallest patch of long grass will provide shelter and food for a range of species. You should get wildflowers popping up, too.