

Homes for Wildlife

There are many types of natural homes you can provide for wildlife in your garden. In addition to planting trees, shrubs, and grasses that provide a variety of wildlife with places to nest, shelter and raise their young, there are plenty of other homes that you can create in your garden. Below are some really easy ways you can 'Make Space for Nature' in your garden.

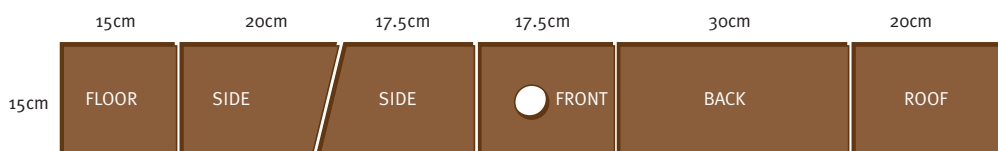
Nest Boxes - the basics

Artificial houses provide nesting sites for many species of insects, birds and mammals. These nest boxes are usually wooden rectangular boxes of various sizes with various entrances. Making the house for a specific species will lessen the competition for nesting sites. Boxes for specific species can be purchased, but can also be made relatively cheaply and easily by even the least skilled handyman! A perfectly rectangular shaped cavity is rarely found in a tree, so wildlife will not mind if the nest box is not a work of art. However, please do ensure that the box is sturdy to prevent predators breaking into it, and that it is rain proof.

Bird Boxes

There are all sorts of nest boxes that cater for a variety of birds. The most common types are those for robins, tits, sparrows, etc. and are basically the 'open fronted' and the 'hole' type. However boxes can be made that are suitable for barn owls, kestrels, house martins, treecreepers, etc.

Dimensions for Bird Box



The common boxes are easily made from the same design, the only difference being the front either containing a hole or cut away. (See diagram). The size of the hole will dictate what species of bird it will attract -

- 25mm is suitable for blue tit and coal tit
- 28mm for great tit
- 28-30mm for tree sparrow and house sparrow.



The boxes can be either nailed or screwed together. The roof should be hinged or screwed to allow the box to be cleaned out at the end of the year. The

outside of the box can be treated with a wood preservative to extend its life, but do not treat the inside. Roofing felt could be fixed to the roof for added protection. Site the box in a sheltered position, on a tree or wall at about head height (or a couple of feet above if possible), preferably facing north-east to south-east. South facing boxes become too hot on a warm sunny day, while west facing boxes are open to prevailing wind and rain. Remember to clean out the nest box each Autumn!

Bat Boxes

Bat boxes can be made to the same dimensions as the bird box above. The only difference being the entrance hole is a slit along the base at the back, and the inside faces should be roughened with a few shallow cuts to provide a good place for the bats to cling to. Preservatives must not be used on the timber as they are toxic to bats. You need a special licence to handle bats, so once erected, do not interfere with the boxes.

Bug Boxes

Bug boxes (or biodiversity boxes) provide comfortable, safe places for a variety of insects to make their home. They are especially good for hibernating lacewings and ladybirds – two important species to have in the garden as they devour insect pests. Solitary bees may also use the box. Bug boxes come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. This type is easily made by using the same trusty design as the bird and bat boxes.

The only difference is that the front is removed and the box filled with cut lengths of bamboo. If the bamboo lengths vary in diameter, it will provide a variety of holes for insects to crawl into. Try to site a number of boxes around the garden in different positions, as this should increase the range of insects using the boxes.



Bug Box

Log Piles & Rock Piles

Standing dead or dying trees, and fallen logs provide excellent natural homes for a variety of insects, birds and mammals, whilst decaying wood supports a range of fungi. Leaving dead or dying trees standing may not be realistic for many gardens, so a similar habitat can be recreated in the form of a log pile. A pile of logs simulates fallen trees and is considered essential in a wildlife garden - most gardens can accommodate even a small log pile! It is best situated in a shady place that remains cool and damp. Use a mixture of wood and different sized logs (with the bark on), starting with the larger logs near the bottom to provide tunnels and openings at ground level. You will need to add new logs as the old ones decay over the years.

Rock piles provide another form of cover for insects, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Try putting such piles in different places around the garden. Those in damp shady areas will attract different species to those in open sunny spots, so increasing the diversity of species in your garden. If possible, don't disturb the pile once you've built it.



Hedgehog

Hedgehog Boxes

There are many designs which can be used, but as long as it is safe and comfortable, the hedgehog will not mind if it is purchased or home made! The important thing is that the entrance should be secure to prevent unwanted disturbance from cats or foxes. Build a wooden box from 2cm thick untreated timber. Recommended dimensions are 30 x 40 x 30cm high.

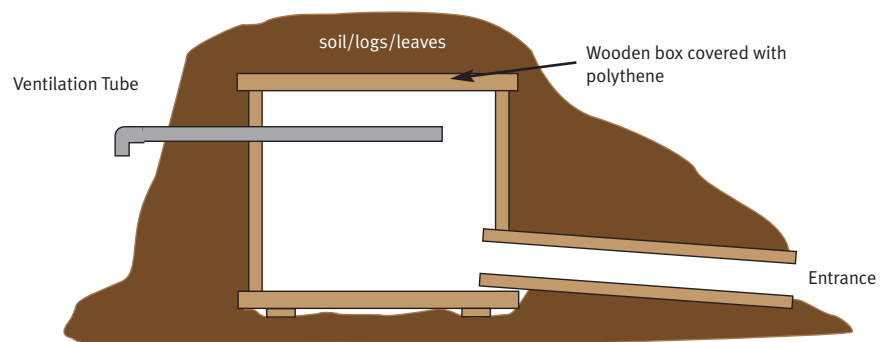
The box may be used by hedgehogs for temporary summer nesting quarters or to hibernate over winter.

You will need...

- . 2 x sides 40 x 30cm.
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- . 2 x boards 40 x 30cm for floor and roof.
- . Entrance tunnel 17 x 14cm high, approximately 30 cm long
- . Ventilation tube, covered at one end with gauze or mesh.
- . Plastic sheeting or bags.
- . Bedding such as straw, leaves.

You can download more Make Space for Nature information guides from our website www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org or contact us on 028 44830282 or email info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org.

Hedgehog Box



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