

## Domestic Gardens – important pieces in the biodiversity jigsaw!

Domestic gardens are a huge wildlife resource and provide a last refuge for many species which are declining in the wider countryside, such as the song thrush, great crested newt, pipistrelle bat, the common frog and hedgehog. A network of gardens forms a wildlife corridor that allows species to pass through urban areas. Gardens provide people with a local connection with nature that might otherwise be unavailable. Contact with wildlife helps to increase an individuals' quality of life as well as providing an opportunity to learn about biodiversity. Many gardens are managed in a way that is relatively unsympathetic to wildlife. Few contain 'wild' areas and some may consist of mono-species close-mown lawns, with heavy chemical usage (for the area) and a lack of wildlife features such as ponds and hedgerows (favouring fencing). There is also an alarming trend to concrete over front gardens for car parking and deck over back gardens, leaving little room for wildlife and adding to flooding problems. Gardens offer great potential to be enhanced for wildlife; garden ponds are extremely important for aquatic bugs and amphibians such as frogs and newts, lawns can support wildflowers, and hedges and trees provide nesting and feeding areas for birds, small mammals and bugs.

A local **Biodiversity Action Plan for Domestic Gardens**, launched in 2000, recognized their importance for wildlife. This plan has been reviewed in 2007/08. Below is an overview of the main objectives and some example actions. It would be great if you can get inspired to contribute towards them!

The objectives of the Domestic Gardens Action Plan are to **assess and monitor our existing habitat, keep the extent of gardens** to ensure safeguarding wildlife gardening features. We want to **create new wildlife gardens** which includes existing gardens being transformed into wildlife gardens, and incorporating wildlife gardening features into new developments. Another objective is to **manage and enhance the existing wildlife gardening areas**. A very important objective is **raise awareness and increase access and involvement with** wildlife gardening.

### Example Domestic Gardens actions:

- Carry out surveys of wildlife features in domestic gardens
- Raise awareness of the issue of infill developments and the impact on gardens
- Distribute wildlife gardening information packs
- Work with new developments to build show homes with demonstration wildlife gardens
- Hold annual Wildlife Garden open days
- Work with Garden centres and gardening societies to promote best practice wildlife gardening. Flag up invasive species.
- Inform of impacts of paving over gardens through the local media
- Promote 'Let our Gardens Live' manifesto and BBC's 'Do One Thing'



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities, statutory agencies, conservation charities and the local Records Centre work together in partnership towards achieving actions outlined in the local Biodiversity Action Plans. To learn more about the Biodiversity Action Plans or to share how you are contributing towards these actions, please visit: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversitypartnership](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversitypartnership) or contact the coordinator Fabiola Blum on 01223

Photo Fabiola Blum