Wild About Gardens
#wildaboutgardens

Stars of the Night

Working together to create a ‘batty’ neighbourhood

Find more information at wildaboutgardens.org.uk
Bats are hibernating to conserve energy as insects are hard to find.

As the weather gets warmer bats wake more often to feed.

Bats are more active, feeding most nights. Females are forming maternity groups, usually returning to roosts previously used.

Females give birth, usually to a single pup, sucking them frequently. Young start flying from about three weeks.

Mating occurs in autumn. Bats feed as much as they can preparing for winter, but spend longer periods torpid (sluggish and cold).

Most bats drop their temperatures further and go into hibernation.
Careful planning will increase the value of your garden or green space to bats and other wildlife, however small it is. As bats need a huge number of insects, a garden that is good for insects is good for bats. Even a window box or tiny town garden can attract insects, which in turn attract bats.

Aim to grow as wide a range of flowers throughout the year as possible to attract a diversity of insects. Here are some suggestions:

### Herbs and aromatic flowers
- Popular with a wide-range of insects

### Tall, pale or night-scented flowers
- These are more obvious to night time insects such as moths

### Aquatic plants
- Plants in ponds and marshy areas provide habitat for aquatic larvae such as mayflies

### Trees, shrubs and climbers
- Will support a huge range of insects
Welcome bats into your garden or green space

As well as growing flowers, there are other ways to attract insects to your garden. You can create microhabitats, by making log or leaf piles, mulching garden beds and leaving hollow stems standing over winter for bugs to shelter in.

If you have a wall or fence grow climbing plants against it to add another level to your garden structure.

Trees and shrubs provide food and shelter for many insect larvae. In a small garden, choose trees that can be coppiced – cut down to the ground every few years – such as hazel to allow new shoots to spring from the base. Young shoots and leaves will support leaf-eating insects, even if they do not produce flowers. They can also be striking focal points in a small garden.

Reduce your light pollution
All bat species are nocturnal, resting in dark conditions during the day and emerging at night to feed. Artificial light, such as street lights, garden security lighting, or decorative lighting on homes and trees, can have a detrimental effect on bats by affecting the time they roost and come out to hunt. You can support bats in your neighbourhood by reducing or turning off your garden lighting. If you'd prefer to keep on your security lighting, consider changing your settings to a dimmer light or fit hoods or cowls over them to limit light pollution.

A pond or marshy area will support the aquatic larvae of insects such as small flies, which are a favourite of pipistrelle bats.

Allow a patch of grass to grow long as this is an important habitat for many insect larvae.

Avoid using pesticides and encourage natural predators instead. Predatory beetles, centipedes, hoverflies, ladybirds, lacewings and ground beetles are the gardener’s friends. They will happily move into compost heaps, log piles and rockeries and will show their appreciation by polishing off your garden pests.

A small hedge or a shelter belt created by walls and fences encourages a concentration of flying insects which in turn will attract more birds and bats.

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How to make your own compost

You will need:
- a shady spot where a heap will stay moist
- some old bricks
- watering can (for dampening dry ingredients before adding)
- shredded wood waste or scrunched newspaper
- gardening fork
- a piece of old carpet or polythene sheet
- green compostable ingredients

Save up enough ingredients for a week or two until you have enough to build a heap in one day.

Add more ingredients as the heap sinks down
- Carpet or polythene sheet to keep it warm and dry
- Shredded wood waste or scrunched up newspaper - a balance of green (nitrogen) and woody (carbon) waste makes the best compost
- Base of bricks

Wait at least three months and turn the heap once with a garden fork

A compost heap will attract bat prey – insects!

How to make an insect hotel

You will need:
- Wooden pallets
- Bricks
- Plastic bottles
- Bamboo canes and/or plastic straws
- Straw
- Leaves
- Ties
- Cardboard
- Stones/pebbles
- Twigs/loose bark

1. Place a wooden pallet in your chosen location. On top of the pallet, line bricks around the corners and across the middle.

2. Place your next pallet on top of this and repeat the process for all of your pallets.

3. Cut off the top two-thirds of your bottles. Fill up half of them with bamboo canes/plastic straws and the other half with rolled up cardboard. Place these inside the hotel.

4. Fill in the remaining spaces with bricks, leaves, pebbles, stones, ties, loose bark and straw.

5. Add in any extra materials that you want to recycle e.g. old pipes, carpeting, toilet tubes, old plant pots. Be creative - add a welcome sign or give your hotel a name!

An insect hotel will provide a feast for bats
Looking after bats through the seasons

Here's a handy guide to the small actions you can take throughout the year to support the stars of the night in your garden or green space:

Spring

- Plant nectar-rich plants, trees and shrubs for example lungwort, primrose, honesty and wallflower.
- Build a pond or water feature.
- Join a local Bat Group to find out more about bats in your area.

Summer

- Count the bats near your home as part of the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) and help to gather important data.
- Create a compost bin, the perfect habitat for some of the bat’s insect prey.
- Buy yourself a bat detector and get listening to their pips and squeaks. Find out if you have a bat visitor.

Autumn

- Keep cats indoors from an hour before sunset, when bats emerge from their roosts.
- Plant nectar-rich plants, including corncockle, fennel, knapweed, lavender, red campion, sea holly, scabious and ox-eye daisy.

Winter

- Do a spot of bat watching at a ‘bat haven’ close to you. For hints on where to watch for bats go to the Big Bat Map www.bigbatmap.org
- Add your own sightings too to help others enjoy your discoveries.

Which flowers attract most insects?
Look at the flowers in your garden to see which ones are most attractive to insects. Look at other gardens to see which flowers are in bloom at different times. This will be a help in planning the best way to attract insects throughout the year. If you’re unsure, you can also use this list to help you to choose insect-attracting plants: rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators

What do I do if I find a grounded bat?
Any bat that is found on the ground, especially during the day, is likely to need help. Contain in a box using gloves or a soft cloth and call the Bat Helpline 0345 1300 228 for further advice.

Be an ambassador for bats
Tell other people what amazing animals bats are, especially during Halloween when bats are a hot topic! Share the ideas in this booklet to help people make their gardens and green spaces more bat-friendly.

Bat watch!
Not sure where to go to see bats? Take a look at our top reserves to spot these flying mammals: wtru.st/see-bats
How to make a bat box

You will need
- an adult to help you
- untreated, rough-sawn timber
- tape measure and pencil
- saw
- hammer and nails

Do not use wood stain or preservative on your box

It is illegal to disturb bats without a licence - do not inspect boxes if you think bats are using them. Look for droppings below to check for occupancy.

How to make a wildlife pond

You will need
- A patch of garden
- Spade
- A plank of wood
- Spirit level
- Butyl pond liner
- Sand
- Water (use rainwater for best results)
- A variety of pond plants
- Large rocks

1. Choose your spot. Draw your pond outline and dig it out, including some shallow areas.
2. Coat the hole with sand (to protect the liner from sharp stones)
3. Make a trench all around the edge of your pond, and lay the edge of the liner into this. Weigh it down with large rocks.
4. Fill the pond up with water.
5. Leave your pond to settle for about a week before adding your plants.
6. Watch and see what wildlife visits.

Remember, don’t add fish or a pump. The fish will eat smaller life forms (including fry and new born larvae) while the pump may suck them up!

* Look for a spot with plenty of sun, ideally with some shade in the afternoon. Try to avoid trees nearby as fallen leaves can pollute the pond.
Listening to bats

Bats, like us, can see when it is light, but at night they send out pulses of sound and listen to the echoes bouncing back from trees or insects. These act as a torch of sound to give them a picture of their surroundings. Humans can usually only hear these echolocation calls by using a device called a bat detector, which makes them audible to humans. This is because echolocation calls are too high pitched for us to hear. Different species echolocate at different frequencies, and can sound very different as well.

Pipistrelles

are the bats you are most likely to see in your garden. They emerge around sunset and have an erratic flight as they chase tiny insects. There are three species of pipistrelle in the UK that look very similar: the common pipistrelle, the soprano pipistrelle and the rarer Nathusius’ pipistrelle.

The noctule

is one of our biggest bats. They emerge early in the evening, just as it starts to get dark, and can sometimes be seen flying in a straight line high overhead, with sudden swoops to catch an insect. The noctule looks about the same size as a starling, and has long narrow wings.

The brown long-eared bat is much more difficult to spot. It comes out after dark and usually flies very close to trees, or even in and out of the branches. Its flight is slow and hovering, a bit like that of a big butterfly.
About Us

For more information about how you can help wildlife in your garden, including gardening advice, activity ideas and wildlife guides, visit The Wildlife Trusts and RHS joint partnership website wildaboutgardens.org.uk

The Wildlife Trusts
The Wildlife Trusts are the UK’s largest people-powered organisation caring for all nature – rivers, bogs, meadows, forests, seas and much more. There are 47 Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK with a shared mission to restore nature everywhere we can and to inspire people to value and take action for wildlife.

Many Wildlife Trusts run projects to specifically address the disappearance of our bats, including raising awareness amongst local communities, conducting surveys, encouraging people to take action at home, running family and educational events and targeting bat hotspots for conservation effort. You can find out more about some of these projects and download our educational resources at: wildlifetrusts.org/bats

The Royal Horticultural Society
For more than 210 years the RHS has been the force behind gardening in the UK. We’re driven by a desire to enrich everyone’s life through plants, and make the nation a greener, more beautiful place.

We believe that everyone in every village, town and city should benefit from growing plants to enhance lives, build stronger, healthier, happier communities, and create better places to live.

Our work in education, science and communities is only possible thanks to the generous support of our visitors, members, partners, donors and sponsors. With your help we can harness the power of horticulture, one gardener at a time.

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)
BCT are the leading NGO solely devoted to the conservation of bats and the landscapes on which they rely. We work closely with many organisations including over 100 bat groups across the UK.

Bats are unique and play a vital role in our environment but during the last century bat populations suffered severe declines. We are working to secure the future of bats in our ever changing world by tackling the threats to bats, from persecution to loss of roosts and changing land use.

As the authoritative voice for bat conservation we work locally, nationally, across Europe and internationally.

National Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228
e: enquiries@bats.org.uk w: bats.org.uk

The Royal Horticultural Society,
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