

# garden

## Description of Habitat

This biodiversity action plan is one in a series of plans within the Wrexham Biodiversity Action Plan. Gardens are important refuges for wildlife, especially in towns. This plan aims to enhance the biodiversity of gardens and reduce the wider effect gardening can have on the environment.

A garden is a man made landscape defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (9th Edition) as " A piece of ground usually partly grassed adjoining a private house used for growing flowers, fruit or vegetables and as a place of recreation."

This action plan also relates to allotments, where garden produce is specifically grown, and those areas of garden (including wildlife areas) created within school grounds. Gardens can provide important wildlife corridors, particularly within an urban area.



Your garden is a potential nature reserve

## Current Status

With the British countryside under threat, and the fact that gardens can be designed, modified and managed to make them attractive to wildlife, every garden - no matter what its size - is a potential nature reserve. Recent research has shown that an average sized garden, managed with conservation in mind, can support up to 3000 different species of plants and animals.

Traditionally gardens consist predominantly of grass lawns, usually closely mown and often fertilised, with extensive areas of herbs, shrubs and trees. However, more now consist predominantly of hard surfaces. Although a significant proportion of any garden vegetation may be native in origin, particularly hedges and associated trees, a large part of it is likely to be non-native and is often of unknown value to wildlife. Plants such as buddleia and ivy provide valuable nectar sources, and others such

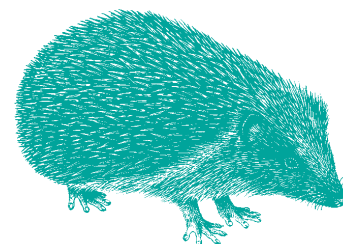
as fruit trees and shrubs provide food for birds and small mammals. A number of nationally declining species such as song thrush, great crested newt, pipistrelle bats and especially hedgehogs are known to occur in gardens.

## Distribution

Gardens are widespread through Britain covering some 3% of the total land area of England and Wales (Owen 1991). The extent of garden habitat within the County Borough is currently unknown.



Flowers provide food and nectar for insects



Hedgehogs eat snails and slugs



**Local & National Biodiversity Priority Species Associated with Gardens**

- hedgehog
- badger
- pipistrelle bat
- songthrush
- linnet
- tree sparrow
- bullfinch
- spotted flycatcher
- great crested newt
- smooth newt
- palmate newt
- common frog
- common toad
- grass snake
- common lizard
- slow worm
- butterflies
- moths
- arable weeds
- ladybirds
- bees
- hoverflies
- large flowered
- hempenettle

## Current Factors Affecting Habitat

### Direct loss of garden area through:

- Loss of large back gardens to housing development.
- Loss of front gardens to concrete for off-road parking.
- Lack of provision of garden space in new developments.

### Loss of wildlife in gardens through:

- Use of garden chemicals and slug pellets.
- Loss of hedges and replacement with fences or walls.
- Fewer open compost heaps and less dead wood left to rot.
- The desire for tidiness (e.g. lack of wild corners, the cutting of rank vegetation, removing seed heads after flowering and disturbing hedges and compost heaps during critical periods).



Peacock butterfly

- Infilling of water features due to safety fears.
- Garden trends, e.g. the move to low maintenance gardens.
- The decline in growing vegetable and fruit crops, which provided wildlife with food, especially in autumn/early winter.
- Predation by domestic cats, particularly on birds.



A compost heap

### Detrimental effects of gardening on the wider environment

- Use of peat causing the destruction of our lowland raised bogs.
- Use of invasive non-native pond plants.
- Dereliction of gardens, particularly in old estates, thus creating reservoirs for invasive aliens; e.g. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).

## Current Action

### Legal Status

Garden habitats have no specific legal protection, although trees are protected in Conservation Areas and through Tree Preservation Orders. Individual species, including great crested newts, bats and badgers are protected under

the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Badger Act 1992, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and other similar legislation.

With regard to new developments private garden space is encouraged through Local Planning Guidance (Note No. 21 - Space Around Dwellings). Wrexham County Borough Council has the policy that back gardens of single bedroom developments should be a minimum of 30 sq m and those with two bedrooms or more 50 sq m. Larger plots are encouraged since they can support sustainable development by enabling residents to grow some of their own food and to compost domestic waste.



## National Action

Many organisations are working to raise awareness of the important role that private gardens can play in conserving wildlife, and in helping people experience wildlife on their doorstep. Projects and initiatives include:

- Many television and radio programmes offering good advice, with presenters advocating organic gardening;
- National Garden Bird Watch Survey (RSPB/BTO);



Allotments are great for growing your own organic vegetables

- Bookshops and public libraries stocking a wide range of books and guides on wildlife gardening; and
- Wildlife gardening leaflets produced by national organisations and wildlife charities.

### Examples of Wildlife and Organic Gardening Publications

- **How to make a wildlife garden**  
Chris Baines, Elm Tree books London 1985
- **Successful organic gardening**  
Geoff Hamilton, Dorling Kindersley, 1987
- **Wildlife Friendly Gardening, a general guide**  
English Nature, 2001
- **Plant for Wildlife**  
Countryside Council for Wales, 2002
- **Bats in the Garden**  
School Garden Company
- **20 things you can do to conserve our rich variety of life.**  
North Wales Wildlife Trust 1997
- **For Peat's sake - Where to buy peat free products**  
Wildlife Trusts 2002
- **How to make Wildflower Habitat Gardens**  
Landlife 2000

## Objectives and Targets

- 1 **Raise awareness of the value and importance of gardens for biodiversity and use it as a flagship habitat over the next ten years.**
- 2 **Reduce the use of peat based composts to 20% over the next ten years.**
- 3 **Reduce the use of wildlife unfriendly pesticides by 50% over the next ten years.**
- 4 **Establish a green network in all new developments.**
- 5 **Establish a monitoring system to determine the extent and value of gardens in the County Borough for wildlife.**

## Local Action

- Agenda 21 Forum/ WCBC sale of compost bins and water butts at reduced prices during Environment Week.
- Annual Green Fair in Wrexham town centre promoting environmental awareness.
- BTCV, Green Gym Community Gardening, allotments, tree nurseries and orchards.
- Creation of Wildlife Areas in school grounds and educational centres.



A bird house helps attract birds to your garden

## Sources Of Information

**The Ecology of a Garden**  
Owen (1991), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

**UK Biodiversity Group Tranche 2 Action Plans, DETR (1998),** English Nature, Peterborough.

**Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report. Volumes 1 & 2.**  
DoE (1995) HMSO, London.

**Oxford English Dictionary 9th Edition.**

## Links to Other Action Plans

Lowland Bog Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough,

Songthrush Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough,

Great Crested Newt Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough\*,

Pond Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough,

Woodland Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough,

Hedgerows Action Plan in Wrexham County Borough\*,

Local Biodiversity Action Plans in neighbouring counties.

\*To be published 2003.



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<i>Proposed Action with Lead Agencies</i>			
Action	Objectives	Partners	Target
<b>Advice and Publicity</b>			
Develop a demonstration wildlife garden.	1	all	By 2010.
Organise an Open Day at an existing wildlife garden.	1	WCBC, Groundwork, BTCV	Once every 2 years for the duration of the plan.
Promote wildlife friendly gardening through leaflets, talks and awards.	1, 2, 3	CCW, NWWT, WCBC, Libraries, BTCV, Garden Centres	2003 give at least 2 talks per year to allotment and gardening societies.
Produce advice on best practice, e.g. organic gardening, pest control, timing of hedge cutting, water saving, cat bells etc.	1, 3	All	2006
Initiate a peat free compost campaign.	2	NWWT, CCW, EN, WCBC	2003
Promote recycling schemes, e.g. composting.	2	WCBC, Agenda 21, Groundwork	Ongoing.
Use local events and publications to promote and raise awareness.	1, 2, 3	WCBC	Ongoing.
<b>Policy and Legislation</b>			
Lobby for the protection of existing gardens and allotments through the tighter regulation of 'back garden/allotment' development.	5	WCBC	2007
Retain and encourage the provision of hedges in new developments.	4	WCBC	Ongoing.
Initiate and develop green networks, linking gardens to other habitats and the wider countryside.	4	WCBC	By end of 2003.
Instigate opportunities to enhance the guidelines for (future) minimum garden size.	5	WCBC	2007
<b>Management</b>			
Target communities with garden deprivation for the creation of urban green spaces.	1, 2, 5	WCBC, Groundwork, BTCV	Ongoing.
<b>Monitoring and Research</b>			
Survey the extent of gardens (and allotments) from maps and aerial photographs.	2	WCBC, NEWI, Groundwork, BTCV	2012 or when resources permit.
Initiate survey/monitoring of Biodiversity Action Plan and other species in gardens.	4	WCBC, NWWT, Local recorders	Pilot survey 2002.
Link up with national survey events such as RSPB's 'Big Garden Watch'.	4	All	As occur.
Set up a database for garden observations.	4	WCBC/ NWWT, Local recorders	2007

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**Abbreviations for table**

**BTCV** - British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; **CCW** - Countryside Council for Wales; **EN** - English Nature; **NEWI**- North East Wales Institute; **NWWT** - North Wales Wildlife Trust; **RSPB** - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; **WCBC** - Wrexham County Borough Council

*Further information*

**Biodiversity Officer**

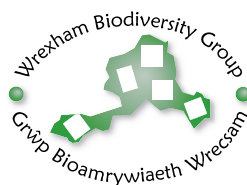
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Please call 01978 292019.**



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