

Planting for wildlife



Primroses, honeysuckle, lavender, violets, roses...these are among many people's favourite flowers. They also happen to be the sort that butterflies, bees and moths love. Attracting wildlife into your garden is easy and endlessly rewarding. There are lots of small changes or choices you can make to increase the variety of creatures dropping by or staying to nest, rest or feed. So whether you have a shady, concrete back yard, a window box or a back garden the size of a football pitch there is always something you can do to bring it alive, fill it with scent and the hum of bees. You might sow a pinch of poppy seed or plant a silver birch tree; keep a pot of marjoram or just let the grass grow tall at the edge of the lawn. There are hundreds of different ways of encouraging wildlife – do just one of them and you make a difference.

Hedges

More than 200,000 miles of hedges in England have been taken out of the countryside in the last 50 years, so every extra yard grown by gardeners will provide much needed nesting habitat for birds and shelter and food for voles, hedgehogs, butterflies, moths and other creatures. So if you have room to grow a hedge – as a boundary, windbreak or to divide sections of the garden – this will be a lot more valuable to wildlife than a fence. Native species provide food for interesting insects and the thorny ones make safe nesting habitat.

Hawthorn	Field maple
Holly	Blackthorn

If you don't have the space and decide to stick with a fence, let honeysuckle and other climbers grow over it.

Shrubs with berries

Feeding the birds is becoming a national hobby. The regular provision of sunflower seeds and peanuts in gardens has given a real boost to many kinds of birds – blue tits, robins, greenfinches are all doing very well as a result. Growing food that birds can harvest themselves is a good idea and adds beauty and colour to the garden.

Dogwood	Guelder rose	Pyracantha
Cotoneaster	Mahonia	Elder

Shrubs and climbers for bees and butterflies

In Britain 25% of our 254 bee species are now listed as endangered. This includes five species that were widespread and common just 20 years ago. Eleven kinds of bumblebee live in gardens – you can make your garden a haven for them by planting any of these:

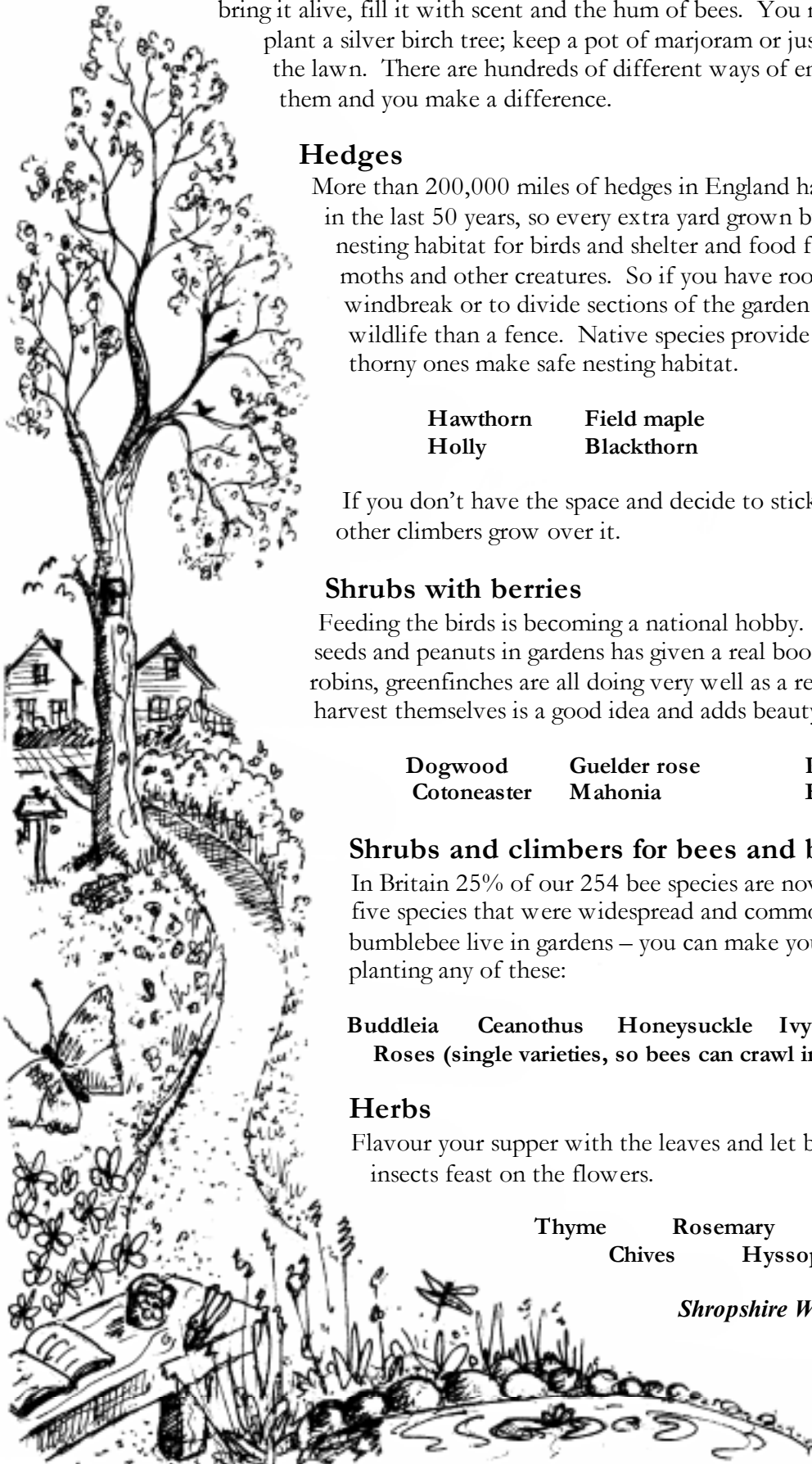
Buddleia Ceanothus Honeysuckle Ivy Passionflower Clematis
Roses (single varieties, so bees can crawl into the centre and feed)

Herbs

Flavour your supper with the leaves and let butterflies, moths, bees and other insects feast on the flowers.

Thyme	Rosemary	Marjoram	Sage	Mint
Chives	Hyssop	Lavender		Fennel

Shropshire Wildlife Trust protects wildlife where you live.



Cottage garden flowers

The old favourites win hands down with wildlife. Single varieties are best.

Michaelmas daisy
Cranesbills
Aster
Honesty
Red Valerian
Ice plant
Feverfew
Forget-me-not
Wallflower

Sunflower
Hollyhock
Candytuft
Marguerite
Columbine
Catmint
Delphinium
Poppies
Sweet rocket



Bulbs

Provide an early source of nectar and colour for your garden with some of these:

Grape hyacinth
Wild daffodil
Crocus
Snowdrop

Wildflowers

Many of our wildflowers make ideal garden plants, flowering over long periods and providing lots of vibrant colour. They're perfect for wildlife too, of course. You might like to add a few of these to a flower border or make a mini-meadow and let them naturalise:

Ox-eye daisy
Yarrow
Field scabious
Clover
Knapweed
Cowslip

Under-the-hedge/shady area wild flowers

Red campion
Lesser celandine
Sweet woodruff
Wood anemone
Garlic mustard
White dead nettle
Foxglove
Primrose
Violet

Trees

Native trees win hands down over ornamentals when it comes to providing food for birds, bats and other small mammals.

Smaller species

Silver birch
Hawthorn
Aspen poplar
Crab apple
Rowan
Field maple
Pear/apple varieties
Damson
Holly

Larger species for big gardens, away from the house

You can't beat an oak tree. With over 400 different kinds of insect associated with a native oak, they're a habitat in themselves. Wild cherry, ash and white willow are useful and gorgeous too.

Further reading:

Chris Baines *How to Make a Wildlife Garden*
Fran Hill *Wildlife Gardening*

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