RHS

RHS State of Gardening Report 2025

Contents

CITATION
The RHS State of Gardening Report (2025). The Royal Horticultural Society. RHS, London, UK. (Eds. Griffiths, A., Gush, M.B., Salisbury, A., Sutcliffe, C., Redmond, H., Sachs, A., Konyves, K.)

Foreword

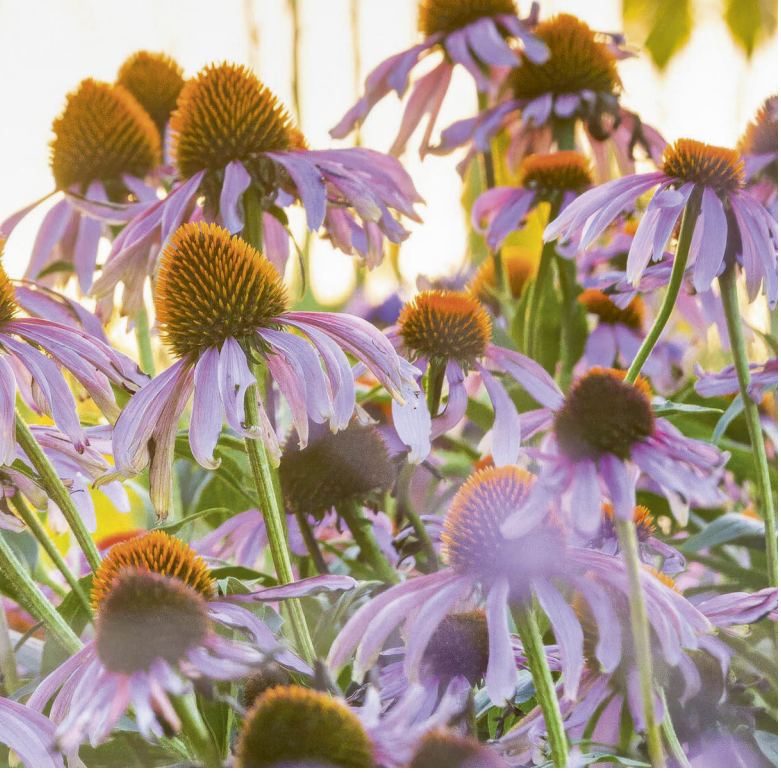
It is with immense pride that I introduce the inaugural *RHS State of Gardening Report* – a landmark publication that sets out, for the first time, a comprehensive national baseline for gardening across Great Britain and the wider UK.

Gardening is one of the most widespread and meaningful ways people connect with nature. It touches the lives of over 41 million people, yet until now its full social, economic and ecological value has been under-recognised. This report changes that. Drawing on new RHS-commissioned research and a wealth of existing data, it reveals the extraordinary scale, diversity and impact of gardening, and the vital role it plays in shaping a greener, healthier and more resilient future.

Gardening is Good – and does Good

It contributes £38 billion to UK GDP, supports 722,000 jobs and generates £6.6 billion in tourism-related GVA. It improves mental, physical and social wellbeing, with 77% of gardeners reporting positive impacts on their mental health. It helps tackle the £65 billion annual cost of obesity and £117.9 billion cost of mental health. And it is a powerful force for inclusion, learning and community cohesion – transforming forgotten spaces into thriving hubs of biodiversity and belonging and urgent research is needed to protect this biodiversity.

Gardens are biodiversity hotspots and climate allies. This report shows that gardens are no longer just refuges for nature – they are now critical components of the UK's biodiversity network. Gardens cover 959,800 hectares – over three times the size of the UK's National Nature Reserves – and support more than 50 million trees and thousands of species. They host over half of the UK's butterfly, amphibian and reptile species, and more than 40% of bird



and mammal species. They store an estimated 158 million tonnes of carbon and deliver over 45 ecosystem services. In short, gardens are ecological powerhouses – and their role in supporting wildlife, climate resilience and ecosystem services must be recognised and protected.

Cultivated plants are central to this story. UK gardens contain over 308,000 cultivated plant types – far exceeding the diversity of food or medicinal crops. Yet this richness is under threat. Around one in three cultivated plants assessed are at risk in cultivation, and one in six are endangered. Protecting this living heritage is essential – not only for biodiversity and climate resilience, but also for the cultural and scientific value these plants represent.

This report is the result of extraordinary collaboration. I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed – from researchers and analysts to gardeners, volunteers, educators and community groups. Your insights and dedication have helped build a robust evidence base that will inform policy, inspire action and support advocacy for years to come.

To realise gardens' full potential, we must act. We must embed gardening in national health, education, housing and climate policy. We must invest in research, infrastructure and equitable access. And we must recognise gardens as critical national assets – ecologically, socially and economically.

The RHS is committed to leading this change. Our vision is a world where gardening is embraced as a way of life – a source of joy and fulfilment, building healthier lives, stronger communities and thriving environments.

I invite you to explore the findings of this report and join us in championing the power of gardening to shape a better future for both people and our planet.

Clare Matterson

Clare Matterson CBE
RHS Director General

Introduction

This is the first document to consolidate current knowledge on the state of gardening. Analysts, researchers, horticultural experts and collaborators have reviewed literature, scrutinised national datasets and synthesised new evidence into a comprehensive status report for 2025 – combining existing data, fresh insights and an update on key knowledge gaps.

The *RHS State of Gardening Report* is the definitive source of insight, statistics and stories about gardening, gardeners and gardens. Designed to inform, inspire and influence, it presents robust data alongside compelling narratives to map the evolving landscape of gardening in Great Britain and the wider UK. As the first report of its kind, it establishes a national baseline and marks the start of a long-term commitment to tracking change, with updates planned every three years.

It aims to provide a clear overview of the scale, diversity and significance of gardening. By capturing long-term trends and benchmarking data, we explore the natural, social and economic value of gardens, along with the health and wellbeing benefits they bring to individuals and communities. This report offers a vital evidence base to support decision-making at local and national levels, while reinforcing the RHS's role as a leading advocate for the contribution gardens and gardening make to climate resilience, public health and economic growth.

Report Structure

The report is organised into three key sections:
SECTION 1: Gardening Today facts and figures – A snapshot of current gardening practices, with baseline data to be tracked over time.
SECTION 2: Impacts of Gardening – An exploration of how gardens contribute to wellbeing, nature, resilience and the economy.
SECTION 3: Conclusions – A synthesis of findings and their relevance for future action and advocacy.
Together, these sections provide a rich foundation for building an evidence-led picture of gardening in the United Kingdom – past, present and future.
METHODOLOGY: The *RHS State of Gardening Report* has been compiled using data from new RHS-commissioned research and pre-existing data from earlier studies. There are more details on methodology at **rhs.org.uk/stateofgardening**
FEEDBACK: We'd love to hear your comments on this inaugural *RHS State of Gardening Report*. Please email **scienceadmin@rhs.org.uk**

Executive summary

Gardening is Good – and Does Good. It is the UK's most widespread interaction with nature, engaging around 41 million people at least once a month. Yet its ecological, social and economic value remains under-recognised in national policy, planning and biodiversity frameworks. Gardening touches more lives than any other nature-based activity in the UK, and this report reveals its scale, significance and untapped potential to shape a better future for people and planet. For those who garden, much of this report will feel familiar. But for many, gardening – and the environmental horticulture industry – is still overlooked or undervalued. This report sets the record straight. Gardening is a powerful agent of change. Gardeners, alongside the environmental horticulture sector, are custodians of biodiversity, public health, climate resilience and a growing green economy. Their work supports thriving ecosystems, healthier communities and sustainable development. Gardens and gardening offer scalable, nature-based solutions to improve wellbeing, strengthen environmental resilience and unlock economic opportunity across the UK.

Economy

Gardening is good for the economy, a green economic engine. Environmental horticulture contributes £38 billion to UK GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2023 – more than the direct GVA (Gross Value Added) contributions of aerospace manufacturing in the same year – and supports 722,000 jobs. By 2030 it is projected to rise to £51.2 billion and 763,000 jobs. It generates £6.6 billion in tourism-related GVA, with 30% of inbound visitors including gardens in their trips.

Health and wellbeing

Gardening is good for health and wellbeing, a proven public health intervention. 77% of gardeners perceive positive impacts on their mental health, 76% on their physical health and 44% on their social wellbeing. In NHS wellbeing gardens 70% of staff experience better mental health and 81% improved morale. Gardening can help tackle the £65 billion annual cost of obesity and the £117.9 billion cost of mental health. Children thrive in gardens, with 74% saying gardening makes them happy and 87% saying being in a garden brings joy. Longitudinal UK Biobank studies link gardening to lower death rates from heart and respiratory disease.

Nature and climate

Gardens are biodiversity hotspots and climate allies, covering 4.6% of Great Britain's land area – over three times the size of UK National Nature Reserves – and supporting over 50 million trees and thousands of species. They provide habitat for over 40% of both bird species and mammals, and more than half of butterfly, amphibian and reptile species. A single domestic garden can host thousands of species, including ones yet to be described. UK gardens store an estimated 158 million tonnes of carbon – equivalent ha for ha to a 30-year-old native woodland – and deliver over 45 ecosystem services. Cultivated plant diversity exceeds that of UK food and medicinal crops, with 308,000 cultivars and 73,300 species in the RHS database. Yet, of the cultivated plants assessed on the Threatened Plants Project, around one in three in cultivation are threatened, and around one in six in cultivation are endangered. Urgent research is needed to assess extinction risk, conservation priorities and genetic value of cultivated plants.

Community cohesion

Gardens are good for community cohesion, gardening should be a human right and everyone should have space to grow. Community gardens foster inclusion, learning and resilience, yet 8.5 million people have never gardened, and children from lower-income households are disproportionately excluded – and research shows this is the same for adults.

Sustainable practices

Sustainable gardening practices are increasing. In 2024, 70% of gardeners who bought compost purchased peat-free, and 52% altered their practices to support wildlife. However, biosecurity awareness remains low at 39%, 40% of gardeners rely solely on mains water, and horticultural skills are in decline. There is a pressing need to improve public understanding of biosecurity, strengthen plant health infrastructure and invest in training.

Conclusion

Gardens are not just private spaces – they are shared national assets. Covering 4.6% of UK land mass, gardens are a massive but overlooked ecological asset, that buffer the effects of climate change and bring joy to millions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The *RHS State of Gardening Report* 2025 acknowledges the contributions of a wide range of individuals and organisations. It is a collaborative effort of the following organisations: British Trust for Ornithology (BTO); Plant Heritage; Oxford Economics; Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG); Future of National Gardens Group (FNGG); Gentian Ltd (AI and Satellite); Ordnance Survey; Botanic Gardens Conservation International; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); Horticultural Trades Association (HTA); Plant Healthy; British Mycological Society; YouGov; DEFRA UK Plant Health Risk Register (UKPHRR); Visit Britain; University of Reading; University of Sheffield; Cranfield University; University Hospital Lewisham. This is a huge collaborative project that relies heavily on data from biological monitoring and recording schemes, much of which is collected by gardeners and volunteers across the UK. Thanks also go to the scientists, analysts, conservationists and staff across the Royal Horticultural Society who contributed to data interpretation, writing, formatting and review.

Headlines

Gardening is Good – and Does Good

Gardening is the UK's most widespread interaction with nature – engaging around 41 million people at least once a month. It's not just a pastime; it's a powerful force for economic growth, public health and environmental resilience. This report reveals the scale, significance and untapped potential of gardening to shape a better future for people and planet. With the right investment, recognition and policy integration, gardening can help deliver a greener, healthier, more inclusive and prosperous UK. Gardening already adds huge value and there are lots of opportunities to deepen that value:

1 GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY:
Gardening is a green economic engine

£38 billion contribution to UK GDP – more than the aerospace sector

722,000 jobs supported

1 in every **51** UK jobs

£51.2 billion and **763,000** jobs projected by 2030

£6.6 billion in tourism-related GVA; 30% of inbound visitors visit gardens

2 GOOD FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING:
Gardening is a proven public health intervention. UK gardeners report positive impacts from gardening

77% mental health improvements

76% physical health improvements

44% social wellbeing improvements

NHS garden: **70%** staff report improved mental health

Helps tackle **£65bn** obesity and **£117.9bn** mental health costs

81% better morale

Linked to lower death rates from heart and respiratory disease (Longitudinal Biobank studies)

3 GOOD FOR NATURE AND CLIMATE:
Gardens are biodiversity hotspots and climate allies

UK gardens cover **959,800** hectares

3.1x the size of UK National Nature Reserves

and store **158m** estimated tonnes of carbon

equal per hectare to a 30-year-old native woodland

1 in **3** Around 1 in 3 cultivated plants assessed are threat-ened

308,000 different cultivated plants

73,300 species – more than UK food and medicinal crops

Gardens support around half of all UK birds, mammals, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians

4 GOOD FOR COMMUNITY COHESION:
Everyone should have a space in which to grow

85% of community gardeners say gardens bring people together

2.5m people took part in community gardening initiatives over the past three years

8.5m people have never gardened – many of whom lack access to suitable space

SO WHAT?

Gardening is a key sector for economic policy, natural capital accounting and infrastructure investment

Gardens should be embedded in health policy, housing strategy and urban design – cost-effective tools for preventative health care

Gardens and garden plant diversity must be recognised in biodiversity strategies, climate policy and land-use planning

Gardening builds resilient, more connected communities and helps combat isolation. It must be embedded in housing, education, workplaces and urban planning. Having 'Space to Grow' should be a human right

Gardening today

Facts and figures

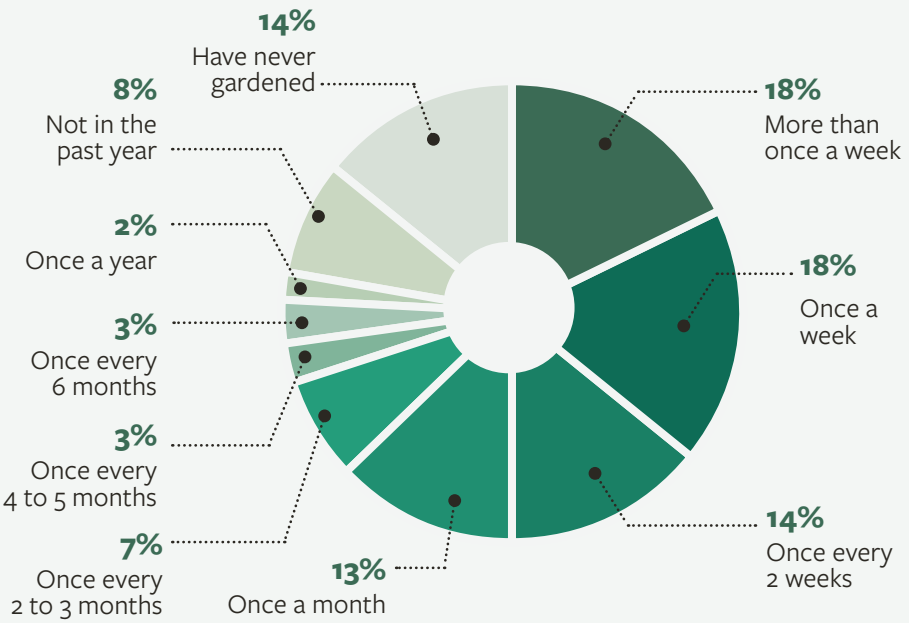
Total number of UK gardeners

Around 41 million people, or 60% of the UK population did gardening at least once a month in 2024. These figures include adults, as well as children aged 4–17 (YouGov, 2024, 2025).

UK adults: Well over half of all UK adults (34 million) garden regularly, but less than a quarter think of themselves as gardeners. This highlights the need to inspire more people to grow in confidence as gardeners.

UK children: Around 7 million or 60% of UK children gardened at least once a month (YouGov, 2025) and 58% say school is one of the places where they garden (YouGov, 2025).

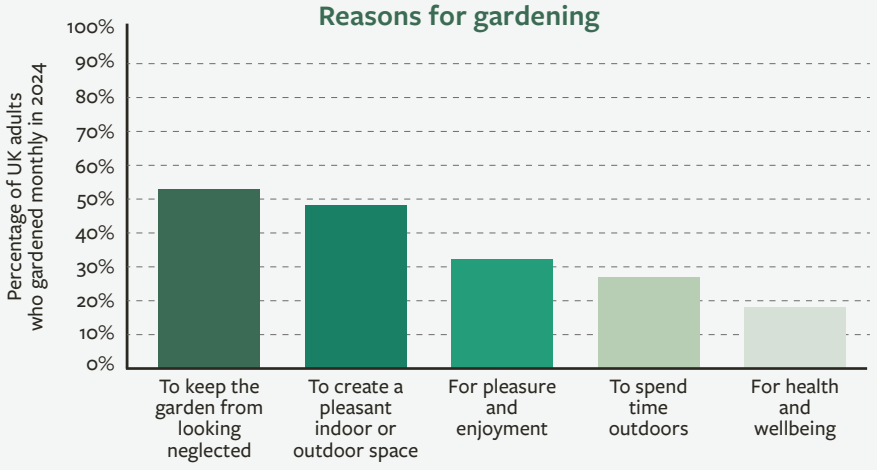
Frequency of gardening among UK adults



Why do UK adults garden?

A survey of UK adults run by the RHS and YouGov asked respondents who gardened at least once a month during 2024 to select their main reasons for gardening. Perhaps if more people recognised the health impacts – more might want to get involved in gardening?

Reasons for gardening



ADULTS AS COMMUNITY GARDENERS

In the past three years, at least 2.5m adults participated in community gardening, and 47% of community gardening groups reported an increase in volunteer numbers over the past 12 months. 14.7 million adults said they would be interested in volunteering for organised community gardening sessions. In the UK's schools, youth clubs, hospitals and care homes, gardens are bringing communities together. Community gardening is transforming thousands of spaces into flourishing hubs for wellbeing, biodiversity and social connection.

What are the reasons, barriers and challenges?

Why do UK children garden?

The YouGov and RHS survey received responses from 1,065 children, 74% of whom said gardening makes them happy. In addition, 87% said that being in a garden brings them joy through spending quality time with family and friends, enjoying the calm of nature, or simply having fun outdoors.

Gardening is often a shared experience, with 80% of children saying they garden at home or at a relative or friend's home. It's a powerful way for generations to connect with grandparents, parents and carers passing on knowledge, stories and a love of growing.

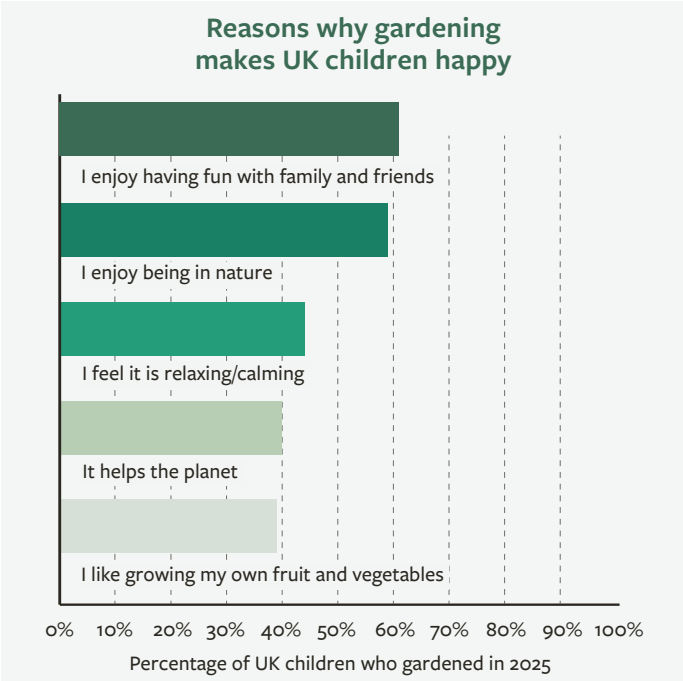
For many children, gardening is a gateway to curiosity, confidence and a lifelong connection with the natural world. Gardens are also living classrooms. From understanding how plants thrive to discovering the insects and wildlife that share our spaces, gardening offers hands-on learning that supports both wellbeing and environmental awareness. In fact, 97% of children we surveyed said it's important to look after nature and the environment, evidence that young people care deeply about the world around them. Children are drawn to gardening for many reasons: growing their own food or flowers, learning how nature works and imagining their dream gardens, complete with treehouses, bright blooms, secret hideouts and homes for birds and pollinators.

National Education Nature Park

The National Education Nature Park is a free programme for all schools, nurseries and colleges in England, helping bring climate and nature into everyday teaching and learning, commissioned by the Department for Education and led by the Natural History Museum with the RHS.

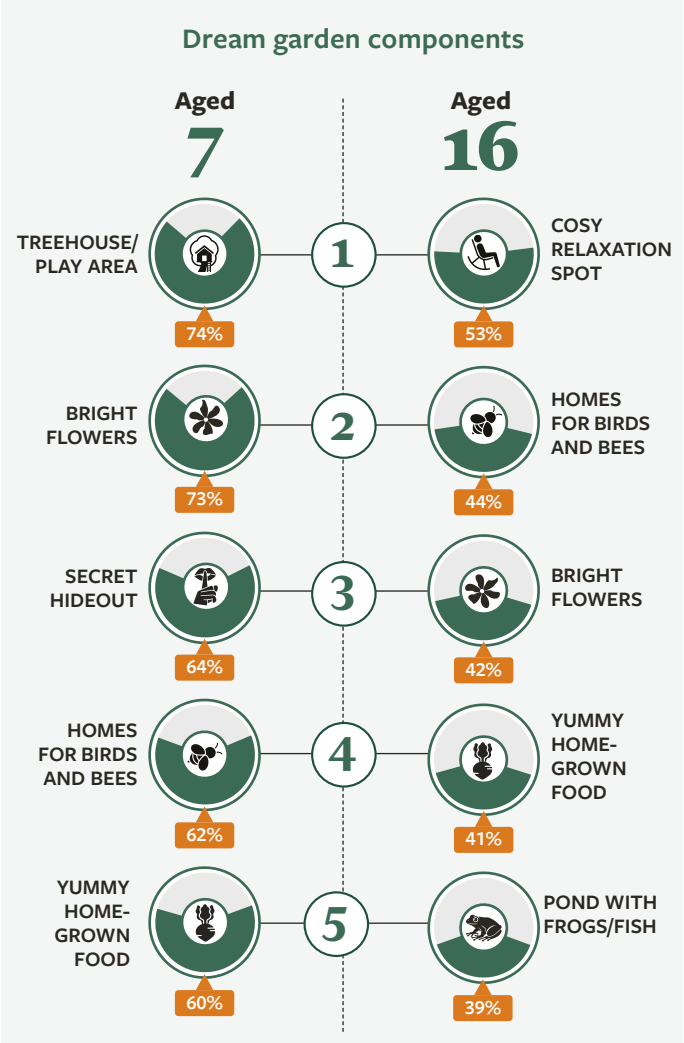
Children and young people lead the way in transforming their learning sites, creating new habitats and turning the 'grey' parts of their sites into green, nature-rich spaces to benefit both people and wildlife.

As they explore, map out and improve their learning sites, young people join a nationwide effort, collecting valuable data that supports real-world science and helps nature recover across the country.



Children's dream gardens

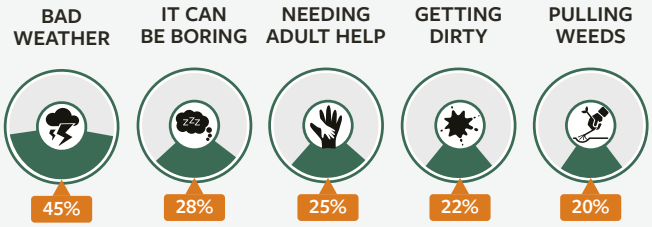
Bright flowers, homes for birds and bees and yummy home-grown food were among the top five dream garden components. Below shows responses from 7 and 16 year-olds:



What are the barriers and challenges for UK children?

But not every child has the same opportunity to get growing. There is a higher likelihood that children from a lower socioeconomic background have never gardened. That's why access to school and community gardens is so important.

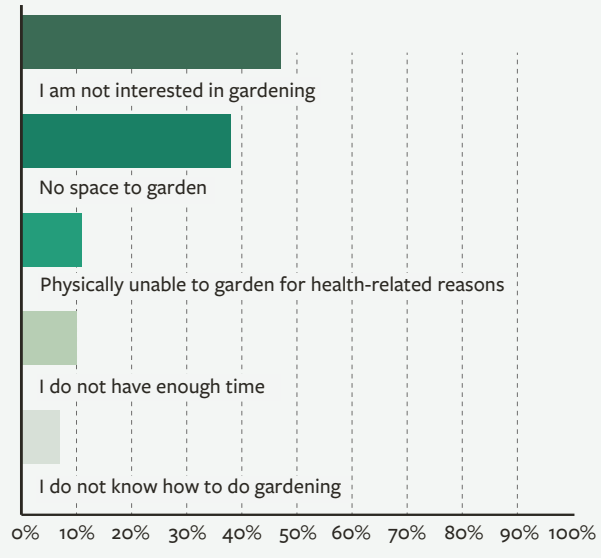
Barriers and challenges to children gardening



What are the barriers and challenges for UK adults?

Of the 22% of UK adults who do not garden, the main reason was a lack of interest. Notably, 38% of non-gardeners had no space in which to garden.

Main reasons for UK adults not gardening



"Gardens are more than just places to play. They're living classrooms"

What are the reasons, barriers and challenges for community gardens?

Why do UK communities garden?

At the beginning of 2025, the RHS communities team embarked on the largest ever survey of Britain's community gardens*. Bringing people together, improving physical and mental health and encouraging more people to enjoy gardening or grow plants were cited as top reasons for their existence. They empower people with new skills; serve as a space for cultural exchange, friendship and intergenerational learning; offer a welcoming area for people to begin their gardening journey or simply to belong; and over half aim to address social isolation.

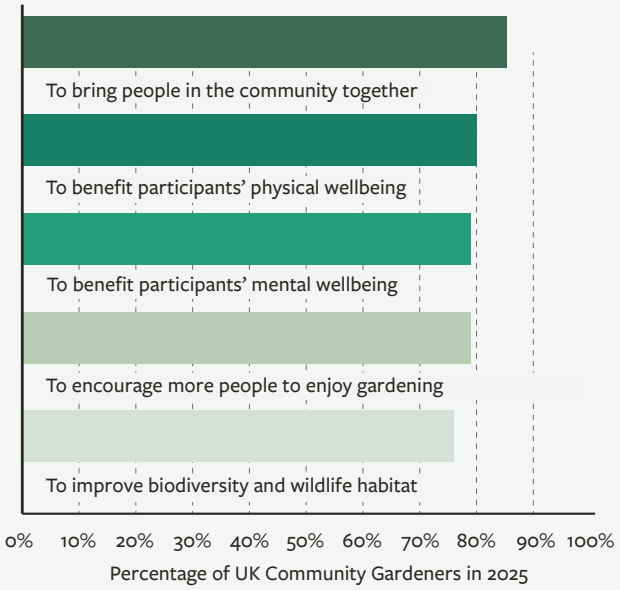
Community gardens do more than grow plants; they grow pride, purpose and connection. By transforming shared spaces, they foster a sense of place, making neighbourhoods cleaner, greener and often safer. As biodiverse urban habitats, community gardens play a crucial role in supporting wildlife, climate resilience, the health of people and the planet, with flowering plants acting as vital corridors for pollinators – particularly in urban areas with more limited green space.

What are the barriers and challenges for UK communities?

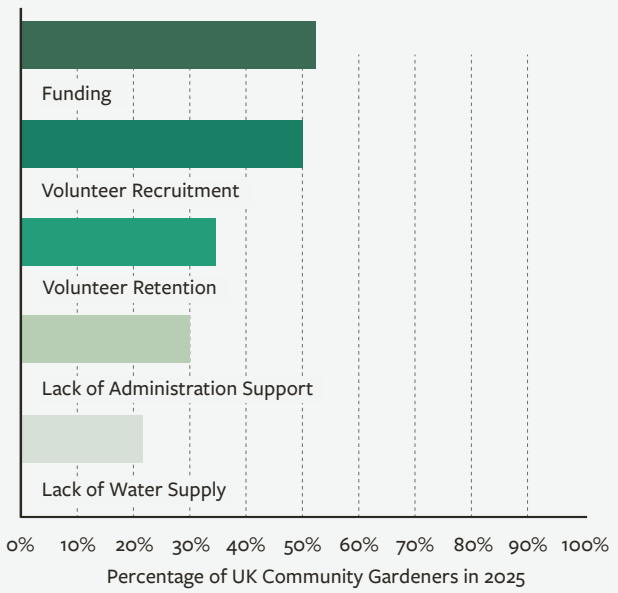
For the 1 in 8 (12%) British households without access to a private garden, community gardens are in particular high demand. However, despite their value, many community gardens face a lack of funding support. Over half fear long-term viability, with over 25% surviving on budgets below £500 per year. Groups stretch every penny through upcycling, recycling and sheer determination, but, without secure funding and land access, many of these spaces risk disappearing, taking with them vital benefits for both people and our planet. Volunteer recruitment and retention was reported as a key challenge for some community gardens.

Recognising the benefits community gardens deliver, some local authorities have begun supporting local efforts: Southwark Council has appointed a Community Gardening Coordinator; Greater Manchester has invested millions through its Green Spaces Fund; and East Suffolk's Field to Fork scheme is helping communities grow their own food.

Motivations for community gardening



Barriers and challenges to community gardening



[*] Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2025): 'RHS: an audit of the status and needs of Community Gardens across the UK' July 2025

How people garden

Peat-free and home compost making in 2024

Our survey results indicate that around half (51.2%) of adult UK gardeners (21.6 million people) bought compost in 2024

70% **of gardeners who purchased compost bought peat-free**

- **56%** of gardeners who purchased plants said they did not know whether the bought plants were grown using peat
- **40%** of gardeners made compost at home

Planting trees in gardens during 2022–2025

Around 1.8 million more people planted trees over three years than cut them down in their main gardening space

In their main gardening space:

- **23%** of UK gardeners planted trees
- **18%** of UK gardeners cut down trees

Bought fertilisers in the past year (2024)

Fertiliser purchases in 2024:

- **11.5%** of gardeners (4.8 million people) bought inorganic
- **14.1%** of gardeners (6.0 million people) bought organic

13.7% **of gardeners (5.8 million people) bought all-in-one lawn treatment**

Biodiversity positive gardening

- **52.4%** of gardeners altered gardening practices with the aim of supporting wildlife in 2024
- **Four out of five** gardeners reported not having applied any pesticides or weedkillers in 2024

297,769 **gardeners have helped map UK garden plant biodiversity via RHS Grow**

Biosecurity neutral

39%

In 2024, 39% (21 million) of UK adults had heard of the term 'biosecurity'

Water the way nature intended – Mains2Rains

Rainwater, recycled greywater and mains water use in 2024:

40% **(17 million people) only used mains water**

- **18%** (7.4 million people) used rainwater and/or grey water
- **21%** (8.9 million people) used a combination of mains, collected rain and grey water
- **21%** (8.9 million people) did not water their plants

Circular plastic

gardeners indicated having reduced their use of plastic when gardening to try to reduce plastic pollution

- **62.4%** of gardeners who had bought plants in plastic pots kept the pots to re-use them in future; **44.6%** recycled them; **12.5%** put them in the rubbish; **7.4%** gave them away and **4.7%** took them back to the garden centre

Zero waste to landfill? in 2024

- **40%** of gardeners (16.9 million people) sent waste plastic, metal or glass from their gardening to be recycled
- **One in ten** gardeners (4.5 million people) opted to buy recycled and/or recyclable materials for use in gardening over less-sustainable alternatives

42% **of gardeners sent no gardening waste to landfill in 2024, while 20% sent between one and ten wheelie bin loads, and 17% more than that**

How much garden space for nature and people?

The RHS worked in collaboration with Gentian Ltd, who assessed ultra-high resolution satellite imagery and used AI and machine learning to provide precise insights into the extent, type, features and biodiversity of cultivated garden space across England, Scotland and Wales. An algorithm and AI were used to extrapolate data for areas not fully covered by the Ordnance Survey (OS) MasterMap Greenspace Layer (April 2025). We aim to incorporate data for Northern Ireland in future reports.

More details can be found in the RHS State of Gardening Methodology Report at **rhs.org.uk/stateofgardening**

How many gardens and how much garden space in Great Britain for nature?

Total number of gardens across all cultivated garden space in GB: 25.8 million
Total area of cultivated garden space in GB: 959,800 hectares (ha) or 4.6% of Great Britain and 3.1 times the area of GB's National Nature Reserves (311,000 ha).
Total number of domestic private gardens in GB: 20.6 million
Total area of domestic private garden space in GB: 502,757 ha. This is 2.4% of Great Britain and 1.6 times the area of GB's National Nature Reserves.
Total number of front and back domestic private gardens in GB: Front gardens = 16.6 million. Back gardens = 19.7 million (differs from total number of domestic private gardens because some homes have only front gardens, some have only back gardens and some have both).
Total area of front and back domestic private garden space in GB: Front Gardens = 162,624 ha (32.4%) Back Gardens = 340,133 ha (67.7%).
Average domestic private garden size in GB: 244m²

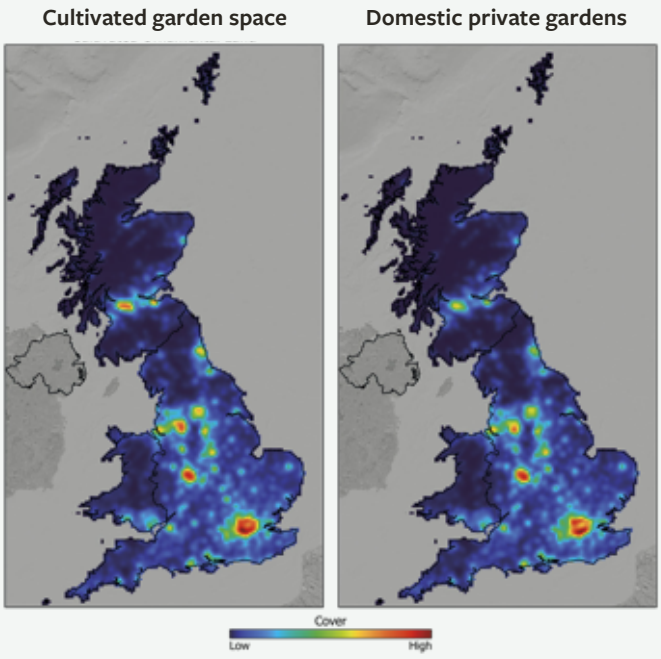


Figure 1 Assessment of cultivated garden space and domestic private gardens across Great Britain
Heat maps of cultivated garden space (above left) and domestic private gardens (above right) across Great Britain, including both the mapped and extrapolated gardens.

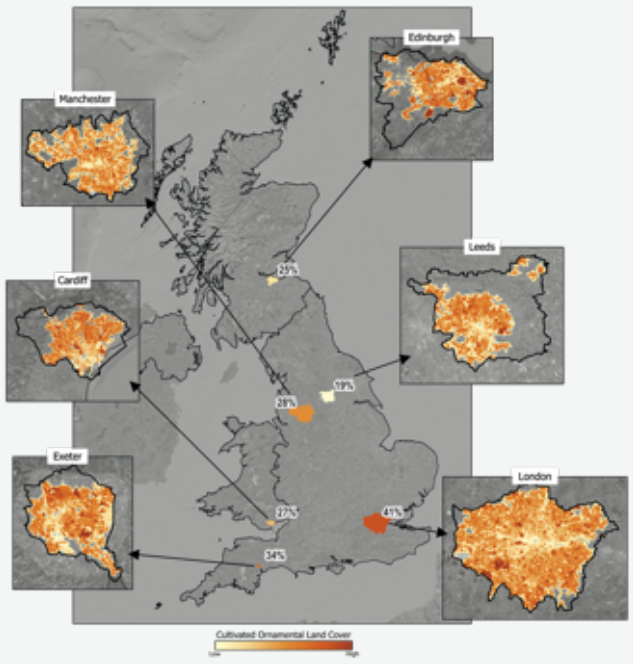


Figure 2 Assessment of selected representative cities across Great Britain
Coverage of cultivated garden space across the six representative cities analysed for this report. Percentage values represent the proportion of each city's area covered by cultivated garden space, and heat maps show the spatial distribution of this land within city boundaries.

Vegetated and non-vegetated areas in UK gardens

Non vegetated

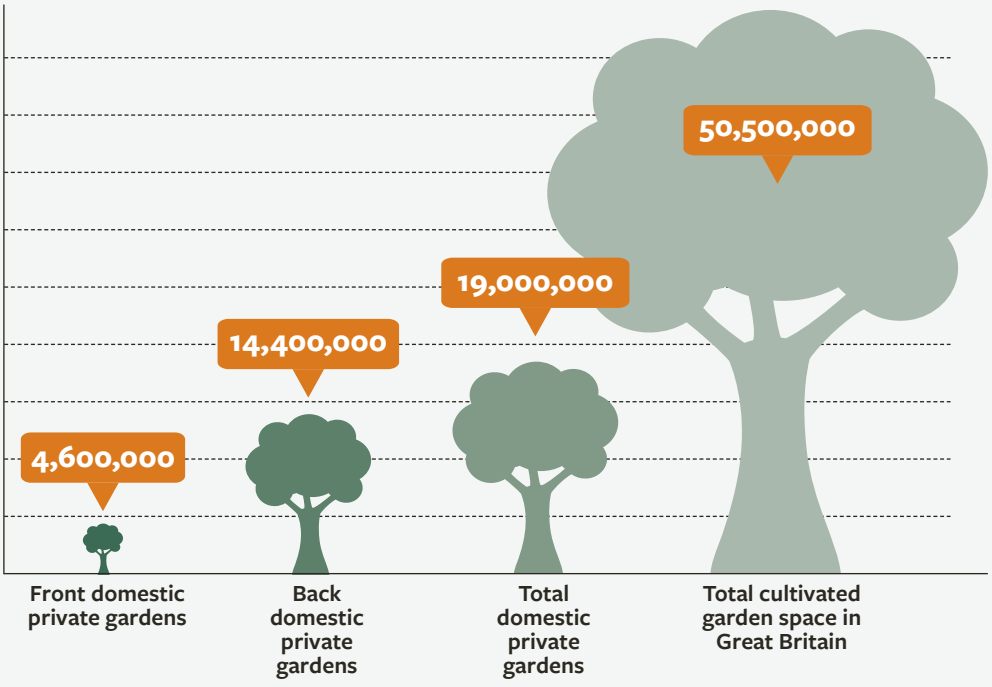
Vegetated

Metric	Front domestic private gardens (ha)	Back domestic private gardens (ha)	Total domestic private gardens (ha)	Total cultivated garden space in Great Britain* (ha)
Area under paving (ha)	89,000	123,000	212,000	269,000
Area under artificial lawn (ha)	124	633	757	1,800
Total non-vegetated area (ha)	89,124	123,633	212,757	270,800
Area under trees (ha)	13,900	54,200	68,100	247,000
Area under lawn (ha)	45,800	117,000	162,800	336,000
Area under flower beds (ha)	13,800	45,400	59,200	106,000
Total vegetated area (ha)	73,500	216,600	290,100	689,000
TOTAL non-vegetated + vegetated area (ha)	162,624	340,233	502,857	959,800

[*] Cultivated garden space collectively refers to allotments, public parks, botanical, community, amenity, educational and private gardens

Total number of garden trees

Great Britain's cultivated gardens host 50.5 million trees – six times more than the estimated 8.4 million in London's entire urban forest. Together, these trees form a vital green network that absorbs carbon, cools cities, supports wildlife, reduces flood risk and boosts wellbeing, making them an essential part of the UK's natural infrastructure.



Garden plant diversity

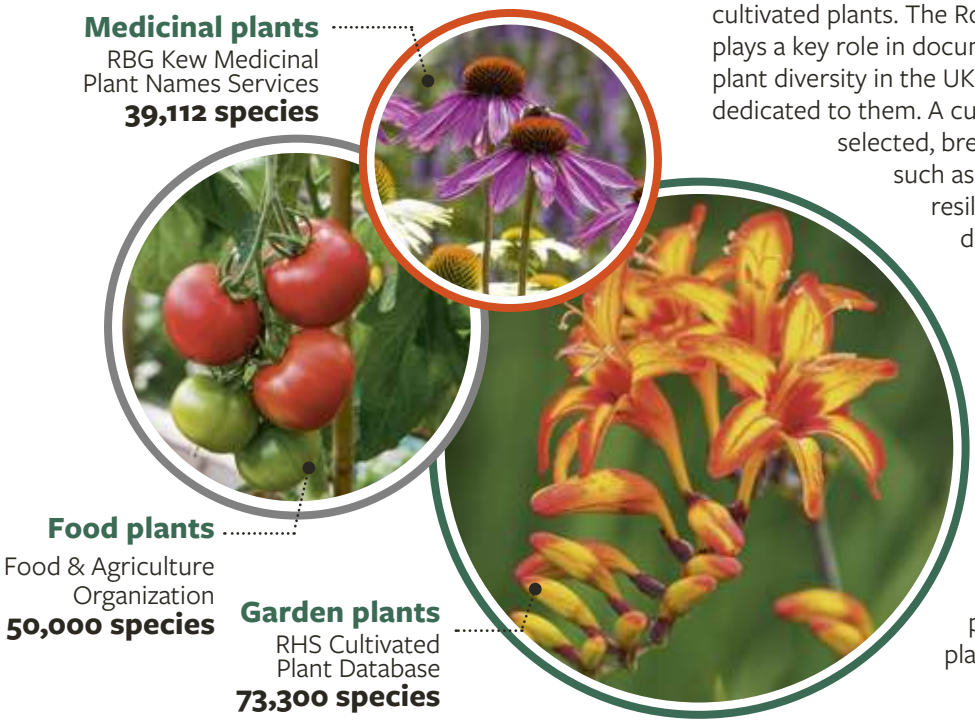
More than 92,000 horticultural plant specimens are housed in the RHS Herbarium

People grow a greater variety of garden plants than any other type of plant. In the UK, the diversity of cultivated garden plants is remarkable – far exceeding the number of food or medicinal plants grown. The RHS Cultivated Plant Database contains more than 308,000 entries representing distinct species and cultivars that are, or have been, grown in RHS gardens. This figure includes historical records such as herbarium specimens and published species and cultivars, but excludes synonyms (secondary names).

Of these, 73,300 are straight species – including natural hybrids, subspecies and varieties – classified under the International Code of Nomenclature (ICN). Despite this extraordinary diversity, there are still significant gaps in our knowledge and evidence base. We lack a clear understanding of which cultivated plants are currently growing in the UK, which may be at risk of extinction, and which are most likely to be suited to future climate conditions. The RHS Plants for Purpose programme is carrying out further research to identify plants that can contribute to nature-based solutions for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience – enabling us to prioritise cultivated plants and landscapes with purpose, and ensure they, along with the communities who care for them, thrive in future climates.

The 2025 *RHS Plant Finder* contains 64,000 different types of plants available to buy from 360 nurseries.

Number of plant species recorded



The RHS 1851 Royal Commission Herbarium, RHS Garden Wisley, is a nationally and globally significant scientific resource dedicated to the preservation and study of cultivated plants. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) plays a key role in documenting and classifying cultivated plant diversity in the UK, maintaining the largest herbarium dedicated to them. A cultivated plant is any plant intentionally selected, bred, or maintained by humans for traits such as ornamental value, productivity, or resilience to garden conditions. These differ from wild species and often result from deliberate hybridisation, selection, or propagation. Housing over 92,000 cultivated plants, the herbarium supports plant identification, conservation and research. It contributes to UK Government goals in biodiversity and climate resilience, underpins international conservation efforts, and is a vital reference for horticulturists, scientists and policymakers working to safeguard plant diversity for future generations.

Top ten UK plants

The top ten plant genera grown in UK gardens by country are based on data from the RHS Grow App, which currently has 297,769 registered gardeners and 5.71 million plants logged as of 10/06/2025. This dataset only reflects users who have added their plants to the app, and therefore contains gaps that limit a full understanding of planting trends across the UK. As more gardeners contribute their data, the accuracy and completeness of these insights will continue to improve.

Top 10 UK plants

	ENGLAND	WALES	N. IRELAND	SCOTLAND
1	*Rosa* Gertrude Jekyll ('Ausbord') 	*Rosa* Gertrude Jekyll ('Ausbord')	*Rosa lucieae* 	*Rosa* Gertrude Jekyll ('Ausbord')
2	*Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' 	*Salvia* 'Hot Lips' 	*Hydrangea macrophylla* 	*Clematis montana* 
3	*Clematis montana*	*Clematis montana*	*Salvia officinalis* 	*Allium schoeno-prasum* 
4	*Allium schoenoprasum*	*Allium schoenoprasum*	*Clematis montana*	*Geranium* Rozanne ('Gerwat') 
5	*Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' 	*Hydrangea macrophylla*	*Geranium* Rozanne ('Gerwat')	*Salvia officinalis*
6	*Geranium* Rozanne ('Gerwat')	*Geranium* Rozanne ('Gerwat')	*Allium schoenoprasum*	*Hydrangea macrophylla*
7	*Acer palmatum* 	*Acer palmatum*	*Rhodo-dendron calendula-ceum* 	*Rhodo-dendron luteum* 
8	*Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' 	*Lavandula angustifolia*	*Prunus lauro-cerasus* 	*Acer palmatum*
9	*Prunus laurocerasus*	*Dahlia pinnata* 	*Acer palmatum*	*Prunus laurocerasus*
10	Dahlia 'Bishop of Llandaff' 	*Prunus incisa* 'Kojo-no-mai' 	*Lavandula angustifolia*	*Lavandula angustifolia*

Impacts of gardening

Gardens for people, health and wellbeing

UK and global studies show that gardening and gardens deliver wide-ranging benefits: they keep us active, grow food, connect us with nature, and improve people's social, physical and mental wellbeing. Their value was especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Few other lifestyle activities match gardening's potential to boost health. Increasing access to gardens and green spaces, and time spent gardening, can play a significant role in health care, keeping people healthy, active, and saving money for the NHS. It must be considered in policies aimed at tackling ill health and shifting the NHS focus from treatment to prevention, as set out in the Government's 10-year Health Strategy and reflected in the rollout of the first neighbourhood health services.

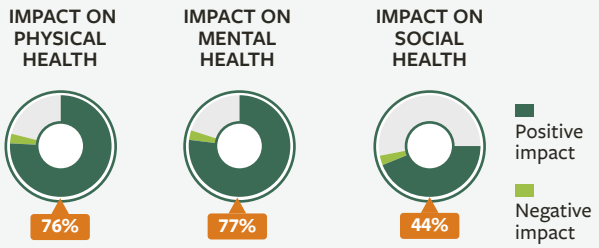
Caring for plants is linked to higher subjective wellbeing scores. The Government's 1.5 million homes target presents a timely opportunity to design wellbeing into everyday life by embedding gardens, greenspaces, gardening, and Green Care – structured, nature-based interventions – into health and housing strategies.

Recognising this, in 2022, the RHS created its first NHS Wellbeing Garden, at the University Hospital Lewisham (UHL). This garden offers a vital space for relaxation and emotional processing for NHS staff, patients and visitors. 70% of surveyed UHL staff reported that the Garden improved their wellbeing and 81% noted a positive impact on workplace morale.

Postive impacts of gardening

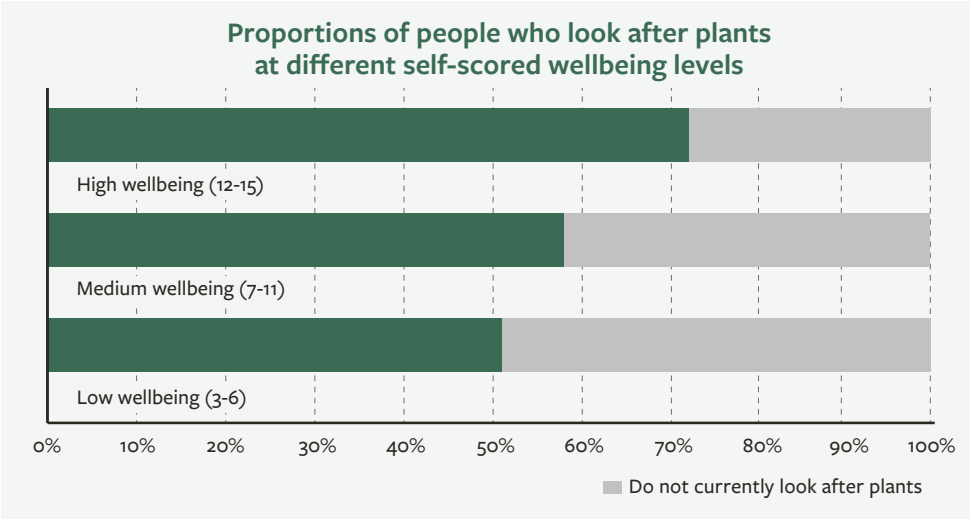
The YouGov 2024 survey asked people who gardened in 2024 how much of a positive or negative effect they felt gardening had on their physical, social and mental health.

The survey data also revealed that people who currently look after plants tend to have higher self-reported wellbeing scores than those who don't currently look after plants (see below).



The graph (right) shows that those who currently look after plants (green) tend to rate their wellbeing higher than those who do not (grey).

Self-scored wellbeing is a compound measure of respondents' scores (1–5) for life satisfaction, feeling that life is worthwhile and happiness on the preceding day. Further details are provided in the methodology report at rhs.org.uk/stateofgardening



OBESITY AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Cost to government: £65 billion per year in 2022. Sedentary lifestyles lead to health issues, such as obesity, which is connected to heart and cerebrovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, depression and some cancers.

UK BIOBANK LONGITUDINAL HEALTH STUDIES

Research in 2022 and 2023 with over 230,000 people found those living near gardens and green spaces had lower death rates, including from heart issues and chronic respiratory diseases.

MENTAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH

Cost to Government: £117.9 billion annually equivalent to 5% of UK's GDP. Numerous studies show that gardens, green spaces and gardening improve a broad range of mental health outcomes, including reductions in depression and anxiety symptoms, stress and mood disturbance, and increase general quality of life.

Gardens for nature – cultivated plant diversity

Cultivated plant diversity is a critical yet undervalued resource that supports human health, biodiversity and climate resilience. These plants help purify air and water, regulate temperature, prevent erosion, support wildlife and improve mental and physical wellbeing. In urban areas, they are especially important for strengthening climate adaptation and resilience. Protecting and serving this plant diversity is crucial to mitigate climate change, adapt to its effects and prevent biodiversity loss. Conservation efforts, research and sustainable practices in gardening and horticulture are vital to preserving these genetic resources and their ecosystem benefits.

Cultivated plant diversity also contributes to achieving key goals in the UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including reducing biodiversity loss, protecting genetic diversity, promoting sustainable trade and enhancing urban biodiversity.

The Threatened Plants Project has assessed over 133,000 cultivated plants. Of these:

Around 1 in 3 plants or 48,000 in cultivation are threatened

Around 1 in 6 plants or 21,000 in cultivation are endangered

"Protecting and conserving this plant diversity is crucial to mitigate climate change and prevent biodiversity loss"

Plant Heritage Threatened Plants Project

The Threatened Plants Project evaluates the conservation status of cultivars grown in the UK and Ireland for at least ten years. Cultivars are classified based on their rarity:

Critical in Cultivation (CRic):
Not found alive.

Endangered (ENic):
Found in only one or two locations.

Vulnerable (VUic):
Found in three garden locations.

Near Threatened (NTic):
Available at one or two nurseries.

Least Concern (LCic):
Widely available and not at risk.

This 2025 assessment uses data from sources incuding the *RHS Plant Finder*, nursery listings, National Plant Collections, Plant Guardians and over 1,200 botanic and historic gardens across the UK and Ireland.

Key threats to garden plants

- Climate change
- Pests and pathogens
- Changing fashions
- Changes to the plant sales trade
- Loss of propagation or cultivation skills, horticultural sciences and plant identification skills

Gardens for nature – animal, fungal and microbial diversity

Biodiversity is the rich tapestry of life on Earth – an intricate web of plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms interacting in countless ways to sustain the natural world. It is not simply a list of species, but the dynamic relationships between them, shaped over millennia. From tiny mosses to tall trees, earthworms to kestrels and single-celled yeast to large fungi, each plays a vital role in maintaining nature's balance. Biodiversity is the foundation of planetary health – and our survival.

Gardens, both large and small, are essential habitats for biodiversity. They provide food, shelter and breeding grounds for wildlife – from birds to hedgehogs, frogs, pollinating insects and other invertebrates. Gardens connect fragmented habitats, support pollinators and bring nature to our doorsteps, fostering curiosity, care and a deeper connection with the natural world.

Through their actions, gardeners and the environmental horticulture sector make a significant contribution towards supporting wildlife, and the data quantifying this offers a valuable baseline. Documenting and researching gardens as distinct habitats – and protecting their biodiversity through the knowledge and practices of gardeners, gardening and the environmental horticulture sector – is essential to helping nature flourish.

2,673
species of plants and animals have been found in one typical UK garden

Over 40%
of all UK bird and mammal species have been recorded in UK gardens

10,000
garden plants out of 64,000 in the *RHS Plant Finder* are Plants for Pollinators

84%
of UK people with access to an outdoor space are doing something to help wildlife there

Over 50%
of all UK, butterflies and amphibians and reptiles have been recorded in gardens

1,999
taxa of fungi have been identified in gardens, with many more to be discovered

3.1x
The total area of UK gardens is 3.1x bigger than all the National Nature Reserves combined

Case Study

JENNIFER OWEN'S LEICESTER GARDEN

In her Leicester garden, over a 30-year period from 1972–2002, Jennifer Owen recorded 2,673 species, 474 plants, 1,997 insects, 138 other invertebrates and 64 vertebrates. This included a quarter of the UK's wild bees, butterflies and ladybirds. Jennifer also conducted a three-year study on parasitoid wasps and found 533 species, seven of which were new to Britain and four that were new to science.

Animal biodiversity in UK gardens

The following data and findings are taken from British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch (GBW). This is the longest-running structured survey of garden wildlife in the world, where, for 30 years, garden owners across the UK have submitted weekly accounts of wildlife in their gardens.

The dataset provides valuable insights, but there are notable gaps – particularly in relation to invertebrates and soil biodiversity. The survey records (since 1995) have found UK gardens to host 44% of all UK bird species, and (since 2003) 43% of all UK mammal species, and over half of all UK butterfly species*.

There is evidence that mammal diversity in gardens can be higher than woodlands and some butterfly species are faring better in gardens than the wider landscape. This demonstrates the critical importance of gardens being distinct biodiversity-rich habitats in their own right, helping wildlife to thrive, while also connecting people with nature on their doorstep.

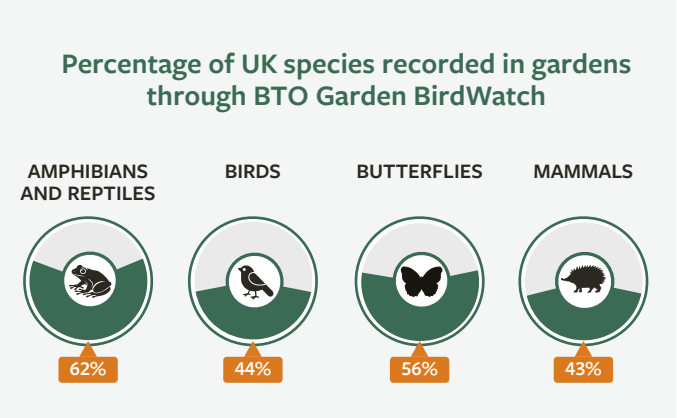
Section 41 species are animals and plants identified by the UK government as being of national conservation priority due to their rarity or decline. These species are legally protected under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to help guide conservation efforts and planning decisions. Of the amphibians, reptiles, birds, butterflies and mammals that are listed as section 41 species, 39% are found in gardens.

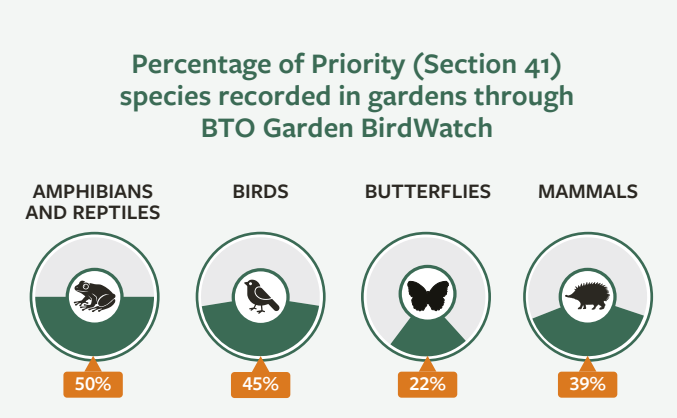
Fungal biodiversity in UK gardens

Fungi play a vital role in maintaining healthy garden ecosystems for human health, yet, our work reveals a gap in knowledge regarding their abundance and specific organism groups. The Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland includes 10,900 records from garden-named sites (1869–2025), covering 1,999 species – 12% of the known UK fungi. Since 2022, the RHS has identified 134 different macrofungi in gardens. Fungi build healthy soils, support wildlife and improve plant health, but remain understudied.

More studies are required to better understand which fungi are present in UK gardens and what beneficial roles they can play.

[*] British Trust for Ornithology, Garden BirdWatch (1995–2024). Analyses using 12 million weekly observations from 34,000+ UK gardens. See Methodology for further details





Gardens for nature – animal, fungal and microbial diversity

Change of species over time*

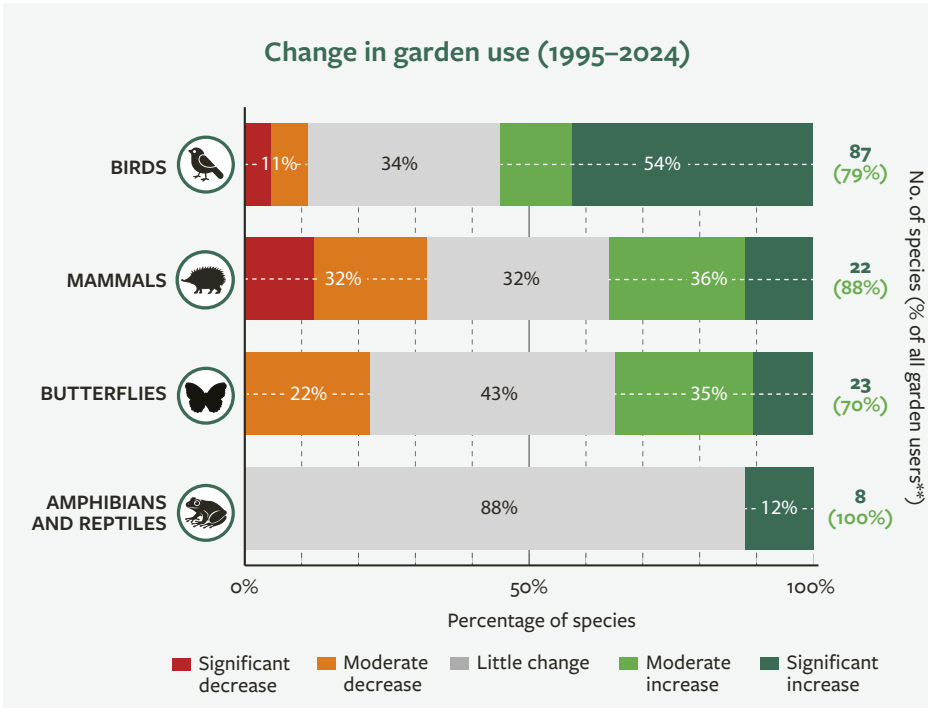
Across birds, mammals, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, gardens support a substantial share of UK biodiversity, with many species increasing their use of gardens over the past 20 years (2005–2024), but mixed trajectories and notable declines in specific species show that gardens are both important distinct habitats for wildlife and sensitive indicators of wider environmental change. Looking at changes over the past 20 years, patterns vary across groups (see graph below).

Birds show the most positive picture, with nearly half of species increasing in their garden use, although this masks sharp declines in familiar species such as greenfinches. Mammals and butterflies display more mixed trajectories, with similar proportions increasing and decreasing, reflecting the diversity of ecological pressures on these groups. Amphibians and reptiles appeared largely unchanged in their garden presence.

Together these findings illustrate the role of gardens as distinct habitats where many species are thriving or expanding, and as sentinels of wider environmental pressures, where declines in once-common species are clearly visible.

Implications

These results demonstrate the importance of gardens as part of the UK's biodiversity network. Gardens are distinct habitats for many species, helping to buffer against wider countryside declines, while also reflecting emerging pressures through declines in once-common wildlife. Regular monitoring of garden species therefore provides an early-warning system for environmental change. Strengthening the biodiversity value of gardens, through wildlife-friendly management and policy recognition, has the potential to deliver significant gains for both nature and people.



*Garden use is a measure of the proportion of gardens where each species was recorded each year. Species are grouped by direction and scale of change: increases or decreases = ≥25% shift over 20 years; little change = within ±25%. Bars and percentages indicate the share of garden-using species in each group.

** Data source: British Trust for Ornithology, Garden BirdWatch (2005–2024). Analyses using data for 176 species from 34,000+ UK gardens; species with insufficient data to model trends are not included.
See Methodology for further details

Wildlife-friendly resources in gardens

The baseline shows that gardens and gardeners provides significant resources for wildlife in gardens. Below is a table showing the different resources that gardeners provide to support UK biodiversity:

"Which of the following does your main gardening space have?"	Percentage of gardeners (n=2139)	Estimated number of UK adult gardeners with this feature in their main gardening space
Flowering annuals or perennials chosen to be pollinator friendly	43.3%	16.5m
A bird bath, wildlife-friendly container pond or bog garden	35.1%	13.3m
Berry-bearing shrubs or trees that are managed to provide wildlife habitat	33.6%	12.8m
A bird box	30.9%	11.7m
Hedging along boundaries	27.9%	10.6m
Dead wood in the form of a wood pile, dead hedge, standing or fallen dead tree or branches	24.7%	9.4m
A hole in the fence to adjacent property to allow wildlife through (hedgehog highway)	24.1%	9.1m
Compost heap or leaf pile	23.5%	8.9m
Area of grass managed for wildlife (eg where grass is allowed to grow longer/mini meadow)	17.5%	6.6m
Another type of insect hotel (ie not for bees)	14.5%	5.5m
A bee hotel	14.2%	5.4m
Dry stone wall or stone pile to provide habitat for reptiles and amphibians	11.3%	4.3m
A pond for wildlife (ie containing no fish)	9.7%	3.6m
A bat box	2.8%	1m
Green roof (eg grass or vegetated roofing on any building/structure)	2%	0.76m

Wildlife-friendly gardening actions in the past 12 months

The baseline shows that many UK gardeners engage in actions to help biodiversity thrive.
This identifies more opportunities for gardeners to increase their actions in gardens to support biodiversity.

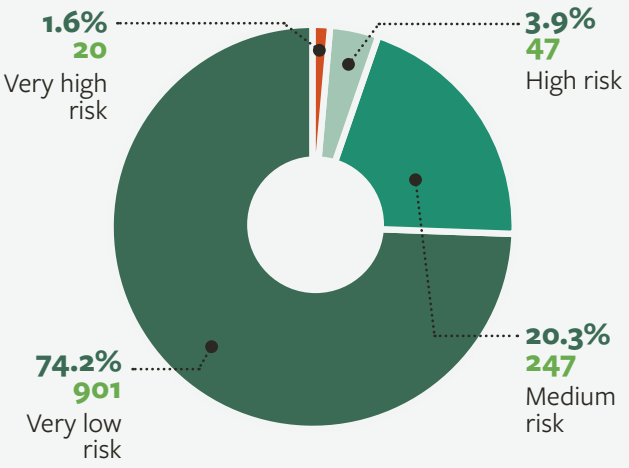
"In the past 12 months, which, if any, of the following have you done in relation to gardening?"	Percentage of UK gardeners (n=2368)	Estimated number of UK adult gardeners who did this
Provided additional food for garden wildlife (eg bird feeders/food for hedgehogs)	35%	14.7m
Left seed heads or stems uncut in winter months to provide seeds and nesting material for birds	30%	12.5m
Allowed some self-seeded wild plants (eg clover or dandelions) to grow in some areas	28%	11.7m
Retained all my clippings and trimmings and dead wood in the garden (for composting, mulching or to provide habitats) rather than sending to green waste	17%	7.2m
Delayed or altered hedge cutting to allow plants to provide habitat with resources and habitat	17%	7.1m
Delayed or altered lawn mowing to allow flowering lawn plants to provide nectar for insects	17%	7m
Searched online to look for information on how to garden sustainably or for wildlife	14%	6m
Voluntarily submitted data for any garden wildlife surveys, citizen science projects or monitoring (eg BTO Garden BirdWatch, Garden Butterfly Survey)	13%	5.4m
Prioritised incorporating single-flowered plants to maximise nectar availability for insects	7%	3.1m
Engaged with my neighbours or local community to try to support local wildlife and nature	7%	2.7m

Gardens for nature – biosecurity and plant health

Biosecurity refers to the measures taken to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms threatening people, animals and plants. In the UK, it plays a vital role in protecting our environment, gardens, agriculture and native wildlife. Garden biosecurity involves actions such as responsible sourcing, good hygiene and monitoring regularly by gardeners, the environmental horticulture sector and government to safeguard plant health and biodiversity. Despite its importance, a 2025 RHS–YouGov survey found that only 39% of the UK public were aware of the term 'biosecurity'. Raising awareness and promoting a plant-healthy nation is essential to protect both environmental and human wellbeing.

Biosecurity Threats to Gardens: Launched in 2013, the UK Plant Health Risk Register (UKPHRR) is a public resource detailing over 1,400 pests and diseases posing risks to gardens and the wider environment. With the diverse range of garden plants grown in the UK, most listed organisms are relevant. Each is scored to indicate its potential threat, helping gardeners track their presence and pathways of spread – higher scores indicate greater risk.

Level of risk from the 1,215 scored UKPHRR entries threatening UK gardens and the wider environment



SOME EXAMPLES OF HIGH-IMPACT SPECIES ON THE UK PLANT HEALTH RISK REGISTER

ORGANISM (common name)
Ash dieback

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Hymenoscyphus fraxineus

ORGANISM TYPE
Fungus

DAMAGE
Likely to kill 80% of ash trees

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
80

ORGANISM (common name)
Oak processionary moth

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Thaumetopoea processionea

ORGANISM TYPE
Insect – moth

DAMAGE
Defoliation of oak, urticating hairs a threat to human/ animal health

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
45

ORGANISM (common name)
Ramorum disease

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Phytophthora ramorum

ORGANISM TYPE
Oomycete

DAMAGE
Causes extensive death of plants – wide host range

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
80

ORGANISM (common name)
Zebra chip

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum

ORGANISM TYPE
Bacterium

DAMAGE
Very serious disease of potato

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
75

ORGANISM (common name)
Root knot nematode

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Meloidogyne luci

ORGANISM TYPE
Nematode

DAMAGE
Root growth of plants affected

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
45

ORGANISM (common name)
A planthopper

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Hyalesthes obsoletus

ORGANISM TYPE
Insect – planthopper

DAMAGE
Can vector plant pathogens

UK RELATIVE RISK RATING (mitigated*)
60

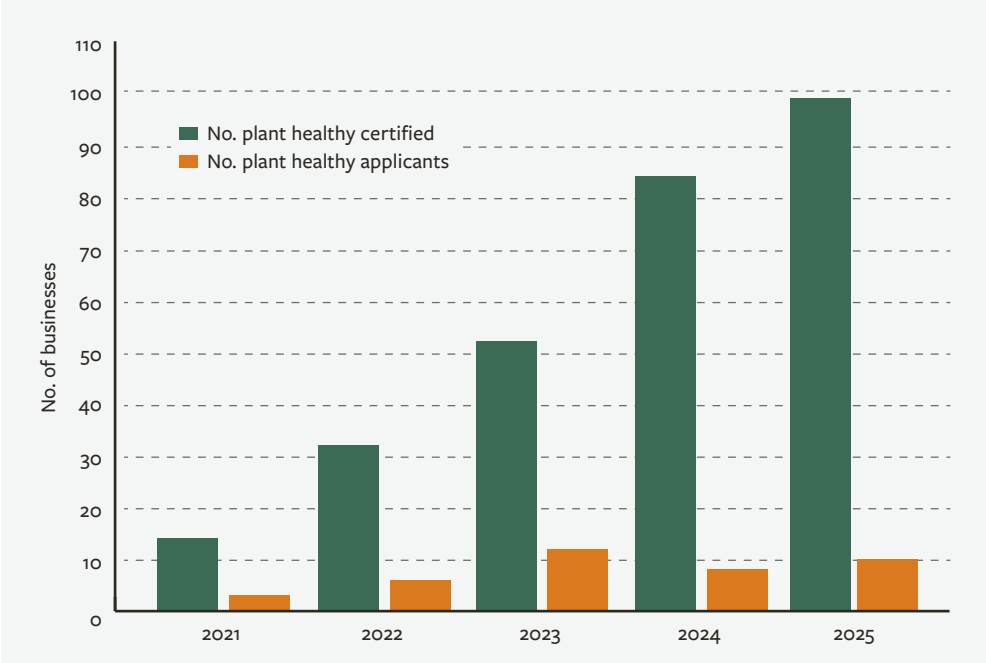
[*] The mitigated risk score includes measures that reduce the risk of introduction or spread of the pest, such as plant health actions, legislation or industry certification schemes

RHS gardening advice – plant health enquiries 2022–2024

Enquiries submitted to the RHS Gardening Advice Service provide a valuable baseline for understanding current pests and diseases affecting UK gardens. This data informs research, helps identify emerging threats for DEFRA and supports long-term monitoring of plant health.

This provides useful insights, but the data is based solely on enquiries submitted to the RHS Gardening Advice Service so may not fully reflect the most common pests and diseases found across UK gardens. Expanding the dataset with contributions from a broader range of gardeners will offer a more comprehensive picture of plant health nationwide and improve its accuracy. We aim to strengthen this dataset in future reports.

	ORGANISM (Pathology Enquiries)	ORGANISM (Entomology Enquiries)
1	Honey fungus	Slugs & snails
2	Rose black spot	Vine weevil (adults and larvae)
3	Apple and pear scab	Box tree moth
4	Phytophthora root rots	Glasshouse thrips
5	Powdery mildew of *Prunus*	Woolly aphid
6	Bacterial leaf spot and canker of *Prunus*	Glasshouse red spider mite
7	Blossom wilt of fruit trees	Aphid on *Buddleja*
8	Pear rust	Mealybugs (glasshouse)
9	Apple and pear canker	Ants
10	Peach leaf curl	Soft scale group



Plant Healthy Certification Scheme

The Plant Healthy Certification Scheme has been developed to help improve biosecurity across the UK's plant supply chain, preventing the spread of the most harmful plant pests and diseases. Businesses that are Plant Healthy certified cover a large proportion of the UK supply chain. Participating organisations must comply with a nationally-agreed Plant Health Management Standard, assessed by independent audit annually. Since its inception in May 2021, the scheme has grown in both size and reach (see left).

Gardens for nature and people – natural and social capital

Domestic gardens across Great Britain collectively provide more than 45 ecosystem services – the essential benefits that nature offers to people. These include:
- Provisioning services, such as food production and pollination;
- Regulating services, including carbon storage, temperature control and water management; and
- Cultural services, which encompass recreation, aesthetic enjoyment and mental wellbeing.

This report uses detailed data on cultivated garden space to estimate the combined natural and social capital value of domestic gardens – that is, their contribution to both ecological health and human wellbeing.

Natural Capital: Natural capital refers to the stock of natural assets – including soil, water, air and biodiversity – that underpin ecosystem services and support sustainable horticulture. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's total natural capital was valued at £1.8 trillion in 2022.

Cultivated green spaces – such as gardens, allotments and parks – cover approximately 959,800 hectares, or 4.6% of Great Britain's land area. Based on this coverage, the estimated natural capital value is £82.8 billion.

Social Capital: Gardening also generates social capital by fostering relationships, encouraging community engagement and strengthening social cohesion. It contributes to public health through physical activity, stress reduction and access to nature.

Research has shown that access to a personal garden is associated with annual health benefits valued between £171 and £575 per person (Mourato *et al*., 2010). When applied to the UK's 25.7 million gardens, this translates to national wellbeing benefits of between £4.3 billion and £14.6 billion.

Carbon Stock (tonnes): For the first time, this report estimates the carbon stock stored in all cultivated garden spaces across Great Britain, drawing on peer-reviewed studies of both above-ground biomass (Davies *et al*., 2011) and below-ground carbon (Edmondson *et al*., 2014).

The total carbon stock is estimated at 158 million tonnes, or 229 tonnes per hectare – a figure comparable to that of a 30-year-old mixed broadleaved native woodland (Natural England Research Report NERR094). However, carbon storage in gardens likely varies regionally, and further research is needed to refine these estimates and better understand the greenhouse gas dynamics of garden ecosystems.

Disservices: The Other Side of Gardening

While gardens offer many benefits, they can also produce environmental and social disservices. These include: use of potable water and energy-intensive machinery that emits carbon; application of pesticides and fertilisers that may pollute watercourses; reliance on non-renewable resources, such as peat and exotic timber; poor planting choices, including invasive species or plants that emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can harm biodiversity and air quality; excessive hard landscaping, like paving, which worsens urban heat and flooding.

Socially, gardening can sometimes reinforce inequalities, lead to neighbour disputes, or cause injury. These disservices underscore the importance of how we garden – our choices, practices, and values matter deeply.

A more sustainable, inclusive, and ecologically-aware approach is essential to ensure gardens contribute positively to both people and the planet.

Carbon stock in cultivated gardens

Vegetation Type	Cultivated Garden Area in Great Britain (ha)	Average Above-Ground* Carbon Concentration (kg C/m²)	Above-Ground Carbon Stock (tonnes)	Average Below-Ground** Carbon Concentration (kg C/m²)	Below-Ground Carbon Stock (tonnes)	Total Carbon Stock in Cultivated Garden Space in GB (tonnes)
Trees	247,000	26.38	65.1m	13.5	33.5m	98.5m
Grass	336,000	0.21	0.7m	9.9	33.2m	34m
Flower Beds	106,000	10.54	11.2m	13.5	14.3m	25.5m
TOTAL	**689,000**		**77m**		**81m**	**158m**

[*] Davies *et al*., 2011. [**] Edmondson *et al*., 2014

Water: the lifeblood of cultivated gardens

Water is essential to plant health and underpins the delivery of a wide range of nature-based services in gardens and landscapes. These services include air purification, urban cooling, flood mitigation, biodiversity support, carbon capture, soil health and contributions to human wellbeing – all of which enhance environmental quality and economic productivity.

Rising pressures from seasonal extremes

The UK is experiencing increasingly extreme seasonal water patterns due to climate change, population growth and rising resource demand. Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters are already impacting how water is managed in domestic gardens and across supply systems.

Warmer air retains more moisture and urban development increases impervious surfaces (like concrete and tarmac), which heightens the risk of flooding and sewage overflows.

To adapt, gardeners and the environmental horticulture sector can play a key role by choosing resilient plant species and adopting efficient water technologies and practices. Despite growing competition for water from households, agriculture and energy sectors, gardening remains vital for biodiversity, wellbeing and long-term water resilience.

Outdoor water use in the UK

On average, UK households use 140 litres of water per person per day, with 5–6% (around 7–8 litres) allocated to gardens, outdoor cleaning and water features. This amounts to about 180 million cubic metres annually, or 500 million litres per day.

The professional environmental horticulture sector (excluding irrigation for cut flowers, public landscapes and private grounds) uses an estimated 21 million cubic metres per year, or 57 million litres per day – with demand peaking sharply during dry summer months when water is most scarce. In response, water companies may impose hosepipe bans to protect supplies and ecosystems.

The need for improved water management

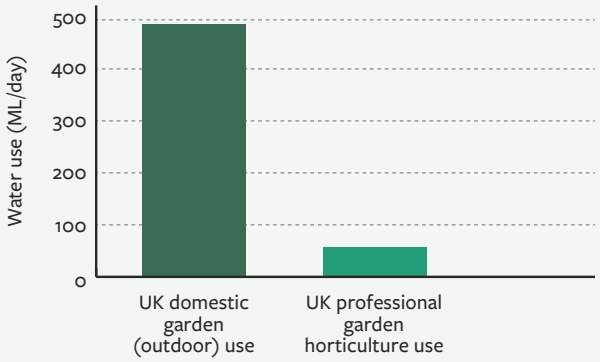
Enhancing water management in gardens is critical to reducing pressure on water infrastructure, sustaining horticultural productivity; and maintaining the nature-based services outlined in this report.

However, there are significant knowledge and data gaps about water use by domestic gardeners and within the wider environmental horticulture industry. Addressing these gaps will require collaborative efforts across sectors to improve data collection and develop sustainable water management.

RHS Mains2Rains campaign: advancing sustainable water use in gardens

The campaign promotes four key water-wise actions to support more sustainable and resilient garden practices:

Estimated volumes of water used in UK domestic gardens and professional horticulture sector



UK gardeners' water use

Collect Rainwater – Expand rainwater storage through the use of water butts, water features and, critically, healthy soil, which acts as a natural reservoir.

Slow the Flow – Minimise rapid runoff from impervious surfaces (eg paving and concrete) to reduce pressure on sewer systems and lower flood risk.

Optimise Soil Health – Improve the soil's ability to retain water by maintaining a balanced structure of water, air and soil particles, enhancing plant health and water efficiency.

Choose the Right Plants for the Right Places – Increase garden resilience by selecting plants suited to the local microclimate, soil conditions and garden design – reducing water demand and improving ecological outcomes.

The campaign also supports the appropriate use of greywater (reused household water) where safe and feasible.

As of August 2025, 3,907 gardeners have pledged their support to the campaign, with the potential to save over 46.4 million litres of mains water annually – a significant contribution to national water resilience and environmental sustainability.

For best-practice guidance and to join the movement, visit: **rhs.org.uk/science/mains2rains**

Gardens for the economy and tourism

Britain is renowned as the Gardening Capital of the World. The Oxford Economics report in 2024 states that the environmental horticulture sector contributed £38 billion (UK GDP) to the UK economy, with £8.5 billion in tax revenues. The sector directly employed 378,000 people in the UK, increasing to 722,000 when accounting for indirect employment. Based on ONS estimates of a 37.1 million-strong UK workforce, this means approximately 1 in 98 jobs are directly employed within the environmental horticulture industry, and 1 in 51 are supported through its wider economic activity. The Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG) aims to expand horticulture's impact and, with the right government support, the sector could grow from £38 billion to £51.2 billion and support 763,000 jobs by 2030. Working with government and local authorities, we can support biodiversity, climate resilience and health, driving economic growth.

Value of Plant and Flower Production: According to DEFRA's Horticulture Statistics, the total value of UK plant and flower production fell slightly by 0.3% to £1.7 billion between 2023 and 2024. Within this, hardy nursery stock decreased by 1% to £1.18 billion, while pot plants grew by 3.8% to £343 million. Flowers and bulbs saw a sharper drop, falling by 3.1% to £175 million. Although the overall decline is modest, it points to a sector struggling to achieve meaningful growth. With stronger recognition and targeted government support, the industry has significant potential to expand and play a greater role in driving economic growth across the UK.

£38 billion

Environmental horticulture and landscaping industry's contribution to UK GDP in 2023

£8.5 billion

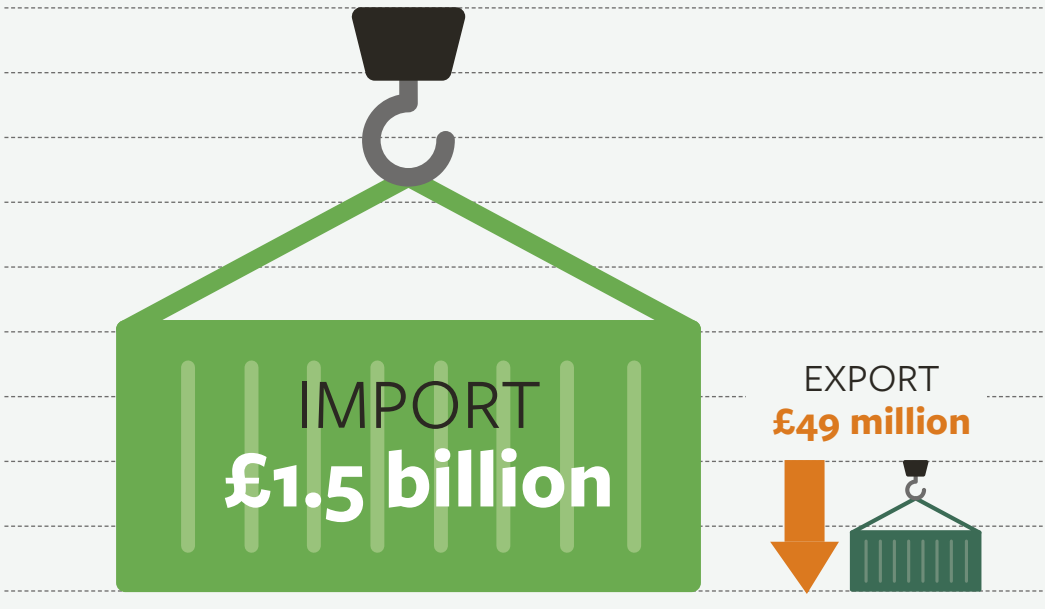
Environmental horticulture and landscaping industry's contribution to UK tax revenues

722,000

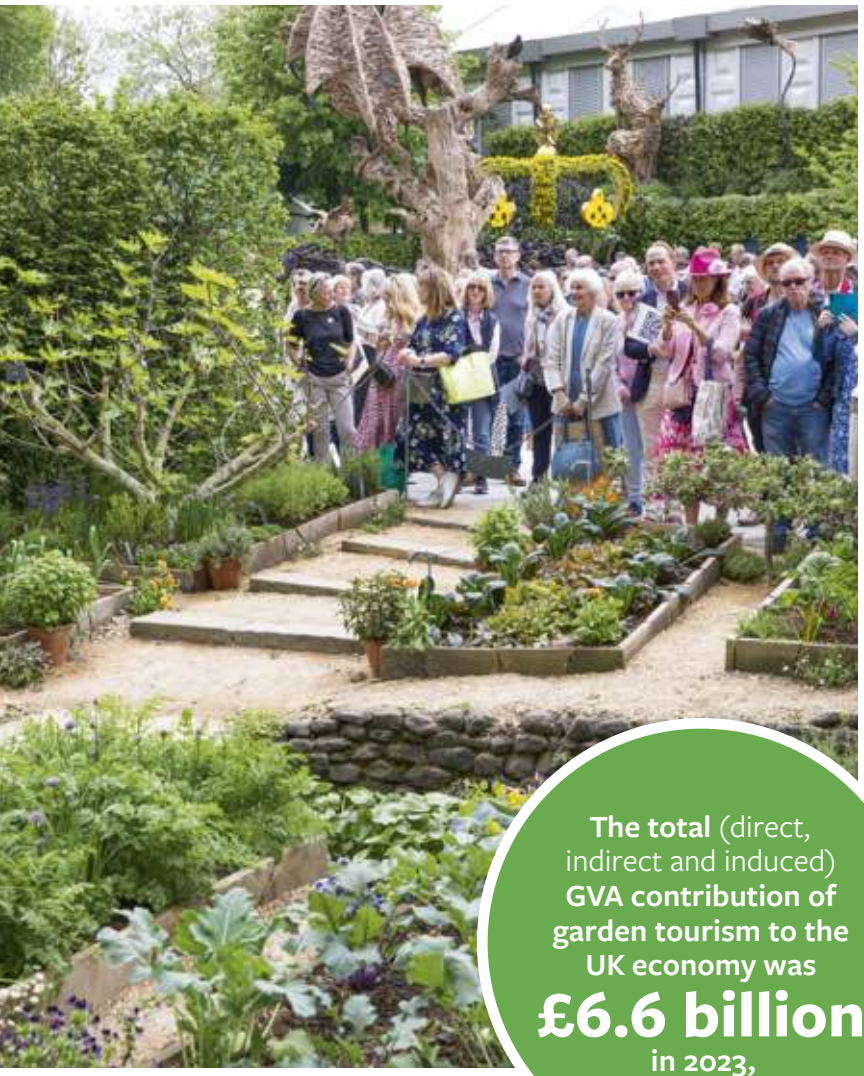
Total jobs supported by the environmental horticulture and landscaping industry in 2023

Imports and Exports:

According to DEFRA Horticulture Statistics in 2024, the value of ornamental imports remained static at £1.5 billion and exports were worth £49 million – a 9.2% decrease on 2023.



Gardens for the economy and tourism



The Environmental Horticulture Industry makes a significant contribution in attracting international visitors to the UK. Britain's status as the Gardening Capital of the World presents a unique selling point and a powerful opportunity to unlock even greater economic growth.

Economy and Garden Tourism: The nation's beautiful gardens and green spaces draw millions of visitors annually. According to Oxford Economics, in 2023 the UK's gardens attracted visitors with a total GVA contribution of £6.6 billion. The Office for National Statistics International Passenger Survey (IPS) indicates that gardens are a significant attraction for international visitors to the UK with approximately one third (30%) of all inbound visits to the UK including at least one visit to a park or public garden.

In 2024, the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, with huge public interest and TV coverage of millions, was ranked as the fifth-most popular 'must-see' experience globally, according to Google search data.

The total (direct, indirect and induced) **GVA contribution of garden tourism to the UK economy was £6.6 billion** in 2023,

which supported **117,400** jobs across the UK economy

and tax revenues of **£1.6 billion**

Oxford Economics estimates that **£4.2 billion** of the total 2023 tourism spending in the UK was attributable to UK parks and gardens.

£3.2 billion (77%) of this was from international visitors to the UK,

which amounts to exports of garden tourism services to overseas residents.

Gardens for employment and skills

The strength of horticulture rests on the skills of its people, yet the sector continues to feel the strain of a workforce under pressure. Gaps in technical expertise, challenges in recruitment and limited routes for progression have left many employers struggling to meet demand. Without greater recognition of horticulture as a skilled and valued profession, these shortages risk holding back the sector's contribution to nature, climate, wellbeing and economic growth.

Reports from industry and Parliament underline the need for systemic reform: embedding horticulture in the national curriculum, developing a dedicated workforce strategy and improving access to seasonal labour. The Oxford Economics 2024 study reinforced the sector's broad value – from biodiversity and urban cooling to tourism and public health – yet horticultural skills remain underrepresented in policy discussions.

Evidence from Pye Tait's sector skills survey highlights fragmented training, inconsistent qualifications and limited career progression. Specialist and technical roles remain hard to fill, as do management and leadership positions.

Despite this, there are positive steps. Over the past 12 years the RHS has doubled its number of work-based learners, created qualifications fit for purpose and contributed to recent skills reforms. The public and botanical heritage sectors are collaborating through the Future of National Gardens Group (FNGG), and cross-industry collaborations such as the Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG) to raise the profile of skills across the sector. Education is also becoming a platform for transformation. The National Education Nature Park – funded by the Department for Education – recognises the importance of biodiversity in schools, inspiring the next generation and embedding environmental horticulture within learning.

With targeted investment, the industry could contribute over £51 billion to GDP and support 763,000 jobs by 2030. Key actions include recognising horticulture as a green skill to unlock access to funding, widening use of the apprenticeship levy, and investing in training infrastructure. At the same time, more insight work is needed to understand the shape of current skills gaps, the changing workforce demographic and environmental horticulture's role in the future world of work.

To realise its potential, environmental horticulture must be valued as a professional, skilled career and recognised as a vital contributor to the UK's environmental, economic and social wellbeing.

Conclusions

Gardens – a National Asset for Nature, People and Planet

This inaugural *RHS State of Gardening Report* sets out for the first time a comprehensive national baseline for gardening across Great Britain and the wider UK. This report reveals the extraordinary scale and impact of gardening across the UK. Gardens are not just private spaces, but shared national assets that nurture biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience and support health, wellbeing and the economy. At a time of environmental and social pressures, gardening offers one of the most widespread and meaningful ways that people connect with nature – a lifelong relationship that can start in childhood and continue through every stage of life.

Everyone should have Space to Grow

The evidence is clear: gardens make us healthier, happier and more resilient. Yet challenges remain. Biodiversity is under pressure, biosecurity awareness is low, and horticultural skills are in decline. Millions of households lack access to a garden of their own, and opportunities are unevenly distributed. Without action, these gaps risk holding back the full contribution gardens could make to a greener, healthier and more inclusive society.

There are, however, reasons for optimism. Community and school gardens are thriving, inspiring children and young people with the joy of growing. Gardeners across the country are embracing more sustainable practices, from peat-free compost to water-wise techniques. New collaborations across the environmental horticulture sector are strengthening skills pathways, while research and innovation are deepening our understanding of how gardens can address climate change, biodiversity loss and public health. Looking ahead, three priorities stand out:

1 Recognition – Gardens must be embedded across health, housing, education, climate and biodiversity strategies, and environmental horticulture recognised as a vital green skill.

2 Investment – Greater support for training, infrastructure and research is needed to secure the sector's future and unlock environmental horticulture's potential to deliver national benefit.

3 Access – Gardening should be possible for everyone, wherever they live – from homes and schools to hospitals and community spaces.

The RHS and its partners are committed to advancing this vision. Initiatives such as the Skills Manifesto, the work of the Future of National Gardens Group, the Environmental Horticulture Group and the National Education Nature Park are already building momentum. With sustained effort, the UK can grow a workforce ready for the future, ensure every community has access to green space, and create a culture where gardening is truly embraced as a way of life.

Gardens are places of joy, resilience and renewal. With the right recognition and support, they can help shape a greener, healthier and more connected Britain for generations to come.

"Gardens nurture biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience and support health, wellbeing and the economy"

Gardening is Good and Does Good

Good for the Economy – gardening is a green economic engine
Good for Health and Wellbeing
– gardening is a proven public health intervention
Good for Nature and Climate
– gardens are biodiversity hotspots and climate allies
Good for Community Cohesion
– gardening builds resilient, connected communities

Conclusions

Policy integration and strategic planning

Gardens are a national asset, but for too long they have been overlooked by politicians and policymakers because their many benefits do not sit neatly within the remit of any one government department. With the right leadership and investment, the nation's gardens – both public and private – can play a vital role in driving economic growth, improving public health and tackling climate change. To unlock this potential, we must:

Guarantee 'Space to Grow' in all housing and urban planning, so every household has access to gardens or shared growing space	Embed gardens and gardening in national preventative health policy as cost-effective Health Care interventions that reduce pressure on the NHS	Recognise gardens as critical infrastructure in urban planning, economic growth, climate resilience and Biodiversity Net Gain	Recognise cultivated plants/ landscapes as biodiversity-positive, ensuring they are counted in biodiversity net gain in natural and social capital frameworks	Develop a national horticultural skills framework to tackle gaps, ensuring horticulture is recognised as a green skills pathway	Scale up the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme across the supply chain to strengthen biosecurity and protect UK gardens from pests and diseases

What next?

This first *RHS State of Gardening Report* has set a baseline but also highlighted gaps. Further research, better data and ongoing monitoring are essential, alongside actions for the RHS, gardeners and environmental horticulture sector to embed gardens and gardening more firmly in policy and practice.

1 CULTIVATED PLANT CONSERVATION

- Develop a national conservation strategy for cultivated plants and landscapes
- **Carry out extinction risk assessments for cultivated plants in a changing climate**
- Assess the genetic value of cultivated species to guide 'right plant, right place, right purpose' choices

2 WILDLIFE AND MICROORGANISMS

- Increase monitoring of wildlife species in gardens over time
- **Address the complete lack of data on soil biodiversity and fungi**
- Build long-term datasets on insect abundance and species trends

3 BIOSECURITY AND PLANT HEALTH

- Raise public awareness of biosecurity (currently 39% awareness)
- **Prioritise and communicate threats from UK Plant Health Risk Register**
- Expand data on pest and disease prevalence beyond RHS member enquiries

4 WATER USE AND RESILIENCE

- Gather robust data on water use by domestic and professional gardeners
- **Model regional water resilience and develop plant suitability guides**

5 SOCIAL AND NATURAL CAPITAL

- Improve valuation of the natural and social capital benefits of gardening
- **Embed gardens within climate, health, economic and natural capital strategies**
- Recognise gardens as critical infrastructure in urban planning and Biodiversity Net Gain

6 EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Deliver horticulture skills in schools, and assess impact on green skills pathways
- **Tackle technical, specialist and leadership skills gaps, and assess effectiveness of current training**
- Provide insight on horticultural careers, workforce demographics, pay, wellbeing and barriers to entry

RHS

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SCAN QR CODE FOR METHODOLOGY