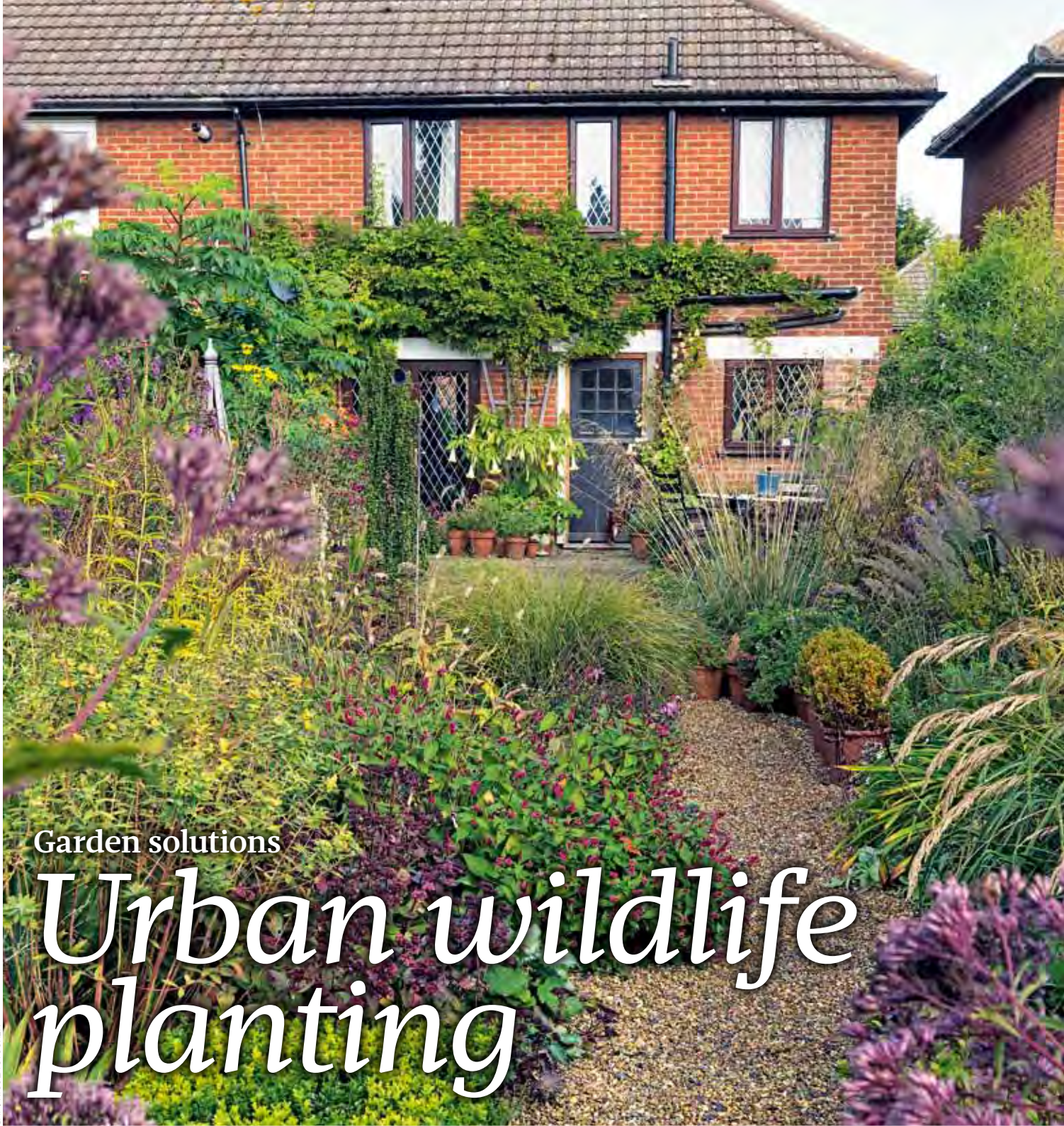




Garden solutions

Urban wildlife planting

GAP / NICOLA STOCKEN

No matter what size, gardens in towns and cities can welcome wildlife by tailoring garden management and including varied planting >>

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GAP / JONATHAN BUCKLEY

Burnet moth on *Echium vulgare*.



RHS / TIM SANDALL

Shrubs pruned to create a good branch framework provide bird nesting sites.

To plant with wildlife in mind is rewarding wherever you garden, but there are particular challenges and opportunities faced by those who garden in towns and cities. Space is often at a premium, so plants need to be attractive and well adapted to an urban environment.

Dry conditions abound. Narrow planting pockets at the base of house walls where shallow footings and a 'rain shadow' effect prove particularly difficult can suit alliums, lavender and perennial wallflowers. Rubble left behind by builders can increase drainage but reduces planting depth. Here low-growing, shallow-rooted plants such as crocus, grape hyacinths, alpines and thymes work well.

Shade is problematic, too, in an urban garden. Small plots are often overshadowed by adjacent buildings, tall fences or street trees. And often plant choice has to include compact selections to fit within small plots.

But on the up side, urban gardens are generally warmer than their rural counterparts, and wildlife is active longer, so there is increased scope for using more tender plants and those that extend the season.

City allotments remain popular; indeed, vegetable growing is sometimes the sole pursuit of an urban gardener. While productivity is paramount, wildlife need not miss out. Some fruit and vegetables rely on insect pollinators for setting fruit, so planting is of mutual benefit.

Choose compact cultivars – often suitable for containers – for growing in tight spaces: cherry tomato 'Sweet 'n' Neat' or courgette 'Patio Star', for example. Allowing a small proportion of crops to 'bolt' or flower (such as rocket, parsley or leek), and packing in flowering herbs such as borage, chives, fennel, marjoram, mint and sage, significantly increases wildlife interest.

Picking the right plant species and cultivar is important, but managing plants to maximise their benefits for wildlife is also part of being an urban wildlife gardener. ●



RHS / REBECCA ROSS

Mix of habitats & plant types

Whatever space you have, plants that help wildlife can be attractive to people, too – many exotic species support wildlife as well as native plants.

- A boring garden for people equals low habitat potential for wildlife. Instead of full perimeter fencing, replace one side with a hedge. Edge drives and paths in sun or shade with thyme or bugle respectively. Lift a slab or two of paving (see pp34–35) and pop in some California poppy (*Eschscholzia*) or fleabane (*Erigeron*). Cover dull walls or drainpipes with flowering climbers.
- Get creative with plant types.

In small gardens, conifers and evergreens are good year-round value and offer cover for nesting birds and invertebrates. Deciduous shrubs and trees fill ecological niches, too.



A red-stemmed cornus, for instance, provides bluetits with aphids in spring and moth caterpillars with food from foliage in summer. Mix early bulbs with later-flowering perennials, and play with flower shape.

- Where better than in a warm, urban garden to grow something to provide flower in every month of the year? The first Plants for Bugs paper (see p74) showed pollinators did best in gardens with both native and non-native plants, so experiment with a few exotics, especially those that keep flowering well into autumn such as fuchsia, *Nicotiana* or annual climber *Eccremocarpus*.

GETTY / SANDRA STANBRIDGE

RHS Science: your garden in context

Often domestic gardens, defined by boundaries such as gates and railings, are perceived as 'private'; road verges, parks and other open spaces as 'public'. And owners of domestic gardens, whether at ground level, on a balcony or a roof terrace, may feel they work in isolation as they cater for 'their' wildlife. But you don't – your gardening and the wildlife you support (from harmless masonry bees in old brickwork to peregrine falcons nesting on tower blocks) are connected across cities – and it is worth seeing them in this context.

It is true some urban structures can act as barriers; many bat species are reluctant to cross wide roads (preferring to travel along more defined corridors rather than open spaces) and hedgehogs will naturally be restricted by garden walls or fencing.

But green spaces often link to each other and to the wider landscape, and mobile species see this territory as a whole.

So, if your garden doesn't have space for a tree but there are good street trees down your road, create a mini-meadow or barrel pond in the garden instead. And if there is late-flowering ivy covering the garages at the back of where you live, plant primulas, sweet william and lavender to offer nectar and pollen earlier in the year.

p154
Wildlife:
bee swarms

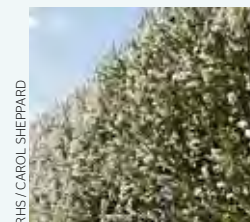


RHS / JULIAN WEICALL

Great plants for urban gardeners

Trees and hedging

- ❖ *Acer campestre* 'Elsrijk': moth larval food plant, nectar and pollen for bees (7m/23ft).
- ❖ *Arbutus unedo* f. *rubra*: evergreen tree, nectar source in winter, especially for bees and butterflies (4m/13ft).
- ❖ *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea* 'Atropurpurea Nana': spiky nesting site, berries loved by winter thrushes, also bee and bumblebee plant (50cm/20in hedge).
- ❖ *Hebe x franciscana* 'Blue Gem': nectar for bees and peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell butterflies (1m/39in hedge).
- ❖ *Malus tschonoskii* (pillar crab): flowers attract insects, fruit eaten by many birds, foxes and small mammals (10m/33ft).



RHS / CAROL SHEPPARD

Crab apple hedge



RHS / GRAHAM TITCHMARSH

Flowers of *Arbutus*

Climbers

- ❖ *Eccremocarpus scaber*: flowers through summer, visited by honeybees (5m/16ft).
- ❖ *Hedera colchica* 'Dentata Variegata': late-season nectar source for bees and hoverflies (5m/16ft).
- ❖ *Humulus lupulus* 'Golden Tassles': larval food plant for several moths and butterflies, including comma and small tortoiseshell (2.5m/8ft).
- ❖ *Jasminum officinale*: summer flowers attract bees, butterflies and hummingbird hawk moth (4m/13ft).
- ❖ *Lonicera periclymenum*: evening scented, attracts moths (6m/20ft).
- ❖ *Pileostegia viburnoides*: flowers for pollinators, site for nesting birds (6m/20ft).



RHS / ANDREW HALSTEAD

Red admiral on ivy



RHS / HERBARIUM

Lonicera periclymenum

Ground cover

- ❖ *Aubrieta*: spring-flowering evergreen loved by bees.
- ❖ *Ajuga reptans*: shade-tolerant bee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Bergenia* 'Eden's Magic Giant': occasional bee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Erica cinerea* 'C.D. Eason': bee pollen and nectar plant, moth larval food plant.
- ❖ *Lamium maculatum*: bee plant, moth larval food plant.
- ❖ *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ears): sun- and drought-tolerant bee plant.
- ❖ *Teucrium chamaedrys* (wall germander): occasional bee plant.
- ❖ *Thymus serpyllum* (wild thyme): bee and bumblebee plant.



RHS / SARAH CUTLER

Ajuga reptans

RHS / TIM SANDALL

Lamium maculatum

Shrubs

- ❖ *Buddleja davidii* Buzz Series: compact butterfly nectar plant and moth larval food plant (1.5m/5ft).
- ❖ *Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Heavenly Blue': late-season flowers for bees and butterflies (1m/39in).
- ❖ *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve': long-season evergreen for honeybees and hoverflies (75cm/30in).
- ❖ *Fatsia japonica*: good late nectar source especially for hoverflies (3m/10ft).
- ❖ *Prunus incisa* 'Kojo-no-mai': bees and bumblebees (2.5m/8ft).
- ❖ *Pyracantha coccinea* 'Red Cushion': bee and fly plant, berries eaten by birds (3m/10ft).



RHS / WENDY WESLEY

Buddleja davidii

RHS / SIMON GARBUTT

Pyracantha berries

Perennials

- ❖ *Campanula glomerata* 'Superba': bee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Dahlia* (Happy Single Series): late-season bee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Erigeron* 'Four Winds': bee, bumblebee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Helleborus x hybridus*: useful bee plant, early in the year.
- ❖ *Origanum vulgare*: hoverfly and honeybee plant.
- ❖ *Primula vulgaris* (primrose): early bee and butterfly plant, finches may eat the seed.
- ❖ *Salvia splendens*: bee plant.
- ❖ *Sedum telephium* Atropurpureum Group 'Purple Emperor': bee plant.



RHS / JASON INGRAM

Primula vulgaris

RHS / TIM SANDALL

Campanula glomerata

Annuals

- ❖ *Borago officinalis* (borage): honeybee plant.
- ❖ *Cleome hassleriana* (spider flower): butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Echium vulgare* 'Blue Bedder': bee and butterfly plant.
- ❖ *Helianthus annuus* (sunflower): visited by bees (for flowers), sparrows, finches and other seed-eating birds.
- ❖ *Papaver rhoeas* (common poppy): visited by hoverflies.
- ❖ *Tropaeolum majus* (nasturtium): bee plant and white butterfly larval food plant.
- ❖ *Verbena rigida* (tender, often grown as an annual): bee and butterfly plant.



RHS / CAROL SHEPPARD

Cleome hassleriana

RHS / CAROL SHEPPARD

Sunflower seedheads

Managing plants for wildlife

Some simple changes in gardening techniques will provide wildlife with extra food sources or sites in which to nest or shelter.

- ❖ Trim berrying hedges such as hawthorn and privet every other year to maximise fruiting potential.
- ❖ Always check for signs of nesting birds before pruning shrubs or trimming hedges. The nesting season usually runs from March to August but in warmer urban areas may start earlier or finish later.
- ❖ Prune back all shoots on young deciduous shrubs such as *Philadelphus* and *Sambucus* by half in their first winter and again by a third in their second winter. This forms a 'cradle' of branches ideal for bird nesting.
- ❖ Help flowering continuity for pollinating insects by manipulating the flowering time. At this time of year, cut all stems down by half on aster, *Echinacea*, *Sedum* and *Solidago* to delay flowering.
- ❖ Remove the main flower spike on buddleia and delphinium immediately it fades to encourage further blooms on lower sideshoots.
- ❖ Delay deadheading a few annuals and perennials (*Centaurea*, *Echinops*, lavender) until after seed-eating birds such as chaffinches, collared doves, dunnocks and sparrows have had a chance to feed on the seedheads.

Extra shelter

Instead of clearing all fallen leaves in autumn, rake them under hedge bases to provide hedgehog habitat.

RHS / TIM SANDALL



RHS / TIM SANDALL

Provide berries

Shorten sideshoots of wall-grown *Pyracantha* in August to expose clusters of red, orange or yellow berries which can be left for birds and small mammals.



RHS / TIM SANDALL

Flowering lawns

Experiment with mowing frequency to see which lawn flowers and grasses bloom. Daisies and selfheal attract hoverflies and bees; tall grasses feed butterfly caterpillars.



RHS / TIM SANDALL

A few well-chosen plants in the front garden will link to other green spaces in the area and support wildlife.



RHS / NEIL HEPPWORTH

Standing stems

Leave deciduous grasses and herbaceous perennials including *Inula*, *Macleaya* and *Miscanthus* to shelter invertebrates such as ladybirds through winter. Clear away in February.

PLANTS FOR BUGS PROJECT

A four-year study was made at RHS Garden Wisley to determine the value of native and non-native plants in supporting invertebrates (*The Garden*, Aug 2015, pp40-44). The first paper, published last year, suggests that gardens with plants from different countries and regions support the most pollinators. Papers will follow on above-ground invertebrates such as beetles.



PERFECT FOR POLLINATORS

As a result of the Plants for Bugs research, the RHS has selected 100 native and non-native plants to help support bees, hoverflies and other pollinating insects. The Perfect for Pollinators: Plants of the World lists plants from the UK, northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere, giving the broadest choice for gardeners.

www.rhs.org.uk For more advice on wildlife planting, search the RHS website as follows:

- search 'Perfect for Pollinators' for lists of Garden Plants, Wildflowers and Plants of the World;
- search 'Attract wildlife' for wildlife gardening.
- ❖ There are many wildlife-related events at RHS Gardens. For more details search 'Wildlife' at www.rhs.org.uk/whatson