

Organic Gardening

How to garden organically for wildlife



Organic gardening is the most natural way of gardening. It ensures any edible produce is pesticide-free and also stops pesticides from inadvertently killing beneficial insects and animals.

For instance, a healthy ladybird population will take care of any greenfly and slugs will easily be kept under control by a hedgehog or toad.

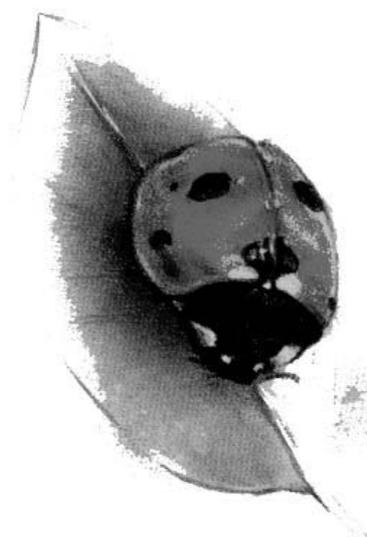
Bees and other insects will pollinate flowers naturally, which

should increase the fruit they produce.

By making your own compost, you will save money and create a fertile soil which will, in turn, guarantee strong, healthy plants and a thriving wildlife population.

Weed control

Most people resort to pesticides to get rid of weeds when there are many ways of avoiding this. The first step is to reduce the space available for unwanted plants to grow in. Cover the ground with a thick growth of plants. If you still have bare earth showing then cover it with a thick mulch. You can use various items for mulch, depending on what looks best in your garden, for example, bark chippings, home produced compost, newspaper, grass cuttings or gravel.



If your patch is covered in lots of weeds, there are some plants you can use to get rid of them. For example, the roots of marigolds give off a chemical which poisons ground elder and bindweed.

Natural fertilisers

Some plants can be harvested to create natural fertilisers which will help produce healthy plants. For example, both nettles and comfrey can be turned into liquid fertilisers which will fight disease and provide nourishment.

1. Chop up the plants and put in a fabric bag. Do not pack them in.
2. Tie the bags at the top. Put the bags into a bucket and cover with water. Keep bucket uncovered and stir at least once a week to speed up fermentation. Plants must be kept under the water so put a weight on top of the bag.
3. After one or two weeks when the mix stops bubbling it is ready.
4. To use the mix, dilute with water (1:5)

Organic pesticides

If you have a garden which is overrun by pests then there are many environmentally friendly tricks you can try to control them. Try not to make chemicals your first step. Below is a list of solutions which have been used for centuries and are certainly worth trying.



Problem

Solution

Aphids	Crush them between your fingers as soon as they appear. Spray with a mild solution of household detergent. Encourage ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies.
Eelworms	French marigolds are said to repel eelworms if planted near affected plants.
Mealy bugs	Encourage ladybirds or spray with pyrethrum based spray.
Scale insects	Wipe the leaves with soapy water.
Slugs or snails	Beer traps, buried in the ground. Build a pond to encourage toads and frogs. Go out in the evening with a bucket of salty water and pick them off by hand.
Vine weevil	Nematode biological control.
Caterpillars	Pick off by hand, or avoid the problem on your cabbages by planting sage near them.

Companion planting

Companion planting is a system which allows gardeners to rely on plants to support and protect each other from disease and pests. It is something which is not an exact science but is again worth trying.



Plant	Companions	Result
Borage	Near strawberries and tomatoes	Attracts bees to cross-pollinate.
Chamomile	Near sick plants	Said to act as a tonic to encourage growth.
Comfrey	In flower beds and vegetable plots	Deep taproots bring vital minerals to the surface.
Dill and Fennel	In vegetable plots	Attract hoverflies which will eat aphids.
Garlic and Chives	Under roses	Believed to keep aphids and black spot away.
Nasturtiums	Amongst vegetables	Attract aphids away from the vegetables and also believed to repel ants and whitefly.

Composting is vitally important for the organic garden. For more details see "Making Compost" leaflet.