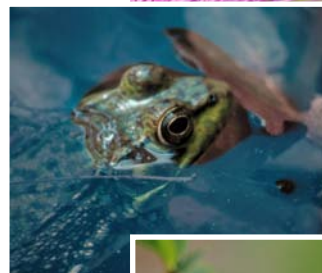
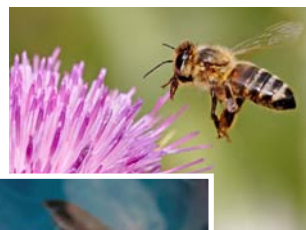


In your garden

We're all aware how important nature is for our wellbeing and the critical need to conserve, restore, protect, and to nurture biodiversity in our climate changing times. The good news is each small change we do individually makes a big difference we can all feel proud about.

Our gardens are important havens for bees, butterflies, birds, beneficial insects, wild flowers, local wildlife, and much more. The more variety in them you can create, the more your garden will hum with life.

To help residents lend nature a helping hand, we've put together a few simple suggestions. Each one will enrich your garden (and your life!) and will help ensure our precious corner of the Chilterns thrives for generations to come.



Letting nature in

Leaving a small patch in your garden to itself allows nature to flourish and provides habitats for a host of creatures to call home and/or overwinter in. It also means less work and more time to relax and enjoy nature in your garden.

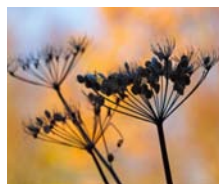
Did you know?

An unmown patch of lawn can contain up to 30% more species of plants, dozens of bee species, moths, and beetles that rely on wildflowers and taller grasses, and attracts more birds and wildlife.



Top tip: weaving a meandering pathway through or around a "no-mow" lawn looks fantastic and allows the family to observe nature close up.

Food and shelter



Creating a mini-meadow and growing a range of plants that flower at different times from Spring to Autumn, shrubs that produce berries, and leaving seed heads over winter ensures food all year round.

Shelter is equally important. A pile of logs, a carpet of undisturbed leaves, long grass, bee hotels, bird boxes, trees and shrubs to perch in creates safe places to build a nest or home or to hide in.



Did you know?

Most bees, such as carpenter or mason bees, do not live in hives but are solitary and live in holes in the ground, or in nooks and crannies, or hollow stems. Leaving part of your garden undisturbed means a greater variety of bees can make your garden their home.

Muck and magic.



Crucially important in every way, soil is where the magic happens, the more we can do to conserve and improve it the better. Feed your soil with home made compost and organic matter, the more earthworms and beneficial microbes it will have, the healthier your garden will be, the more resilient against climate change, the more carbon it stores, and the more biodiversity will flourish.

Did you know?

- Globally, an estimated 59% of species live or grow in soil, including 90% of the world's fungi, 85% of plants and over 50% of bacteria making it the most biodiverse habitat on Earth.
- It takes 10,000 years to create soil but only 10 to destroy it.
- More than three times carbon is stored in soil than in the atmosphere.
- One teaspoon of healthy topsoil contains around 1 billion individual microscopic cells and around 10,000 different species. They enhance soil fertility and soil structure, provide and recycle nutrients for plant growth, and protect plants from disease.



Top tip: If you want to grow veg, improve your soil, do less weeding and save your back, try the popular No Dig method by leading expert Charles Dowding: <https://www.charlesdowding.co.uk>

EARTHWORMS

The more earthworms, the healthier your soil. These wonderful creatures impressed Charles Darwin so much he wrote a book on them*, calling them "nature's ploughs".

- They burrow deep into the soil, creating a network of underground tunnels that aerate the soil, enabling micro-organisms to thrive, plant roots to grow into, and dramatically improve water absorption, which helps reduce puddling, soil compaction, and water run off.
- They're great recyclers, pulling complex organic matter down into the soil, helping it to decompose,

and eat and digest their own body weight of organic matter every day, breaking it down into nutrients plants can easily absorb.

- Their worm casts (poo) are incredibly rich in the three essential plant nutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, and teem with up to 1,000 times more beneficial bacteria than in the parent soil.



* *The formation of Vegetable Mould through the action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits*, 1881

Cultivating kindness

Switching to more organic gardening practices, peat free composts, less harmful methods of pest and disease control, and natural organic fertilisers is kinder to nature, and the best way to boost health and wellbeing of your garden, people and planet.



Did you know?

Pesticides also kill soil life; overuse of nitrogen fertilisers can make soils more acidic which means fewer earthworms, who can't cope with acidic conditions.

Top tip: less is more - less mowing, strimming, light pollution, weeding, and chemicals, all lend nature a big helping hand!

Grow a traditional mixed hedge

A native hedge is one of the best ways to restore nature and conserve a much cherished Chiltern's landmark. Check out the fact sheet below on which species and how to grow them here:

<https://tinyurl.com/tradhedge>



Did you know?



According to CPRE, the countryside charity, around 600 plants, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammal species are thought to either live or feed in traditional hedgerows, including the threatened hazel dormouse and hedgehogs.

Water



Nature needs to drink too! A small pond (brilliant for biodiversity), a bird bath, and shallow trays with fresh water and a few pebbles for insects to land safely on are essential for wildlife, and a magnet for insects, newts, frogs, toads, and birds.

Did you know?

- Water is essential for many insect lifecycles such as dragonfly and damselfly, whose larvae live in slow flowing water and ponds; they're sensitive to pollution and are used by ecologists as indicators of water quality.
- It's thought that around 500,000 natural ponds have been lost in the UK over the last 100 years; garden ponds help offset this, and are a major boost for local wildlife.

NETTLES

Nettles are a wonder plant, make sure you leave a patch.



- They're the sole food plant for caterpillars of the rare small tortoiseshell, plus the comma, red admiral, and peacock butterflies.
- Aphids love nettles, which help lure them away from other plants; as do ladybirds, who eat aphids, especially their larvae, who can eat up to 100 a day.
- Their high nitrogen content makes them an excellent compost activator and natural fertiliser.

Top tip: Nettles are jam-packed with healthy nutrients, including anti-oxidants; use to make spring time soups, sauces, and egg dishes; nettle tea is a well known natural herbal anti-histamine and detoxifier.



If you want to become wilder about your garden, and find out more about how to make your garden a home for nature, these two websites have lots of info to inspire and help you, and fact sheets to download.

RHS and Wildlife Trusts' website "Wild about gardens": <https://tinyurl.com/2rcdh5dc>
Garden Organic: <https://tinyurl.com/mpre5b9s>