

Cheselbourne Climate Action Group:

Insects, especially bees and pollinators are dying out up to 8 times faster than larger animals, and 41% of insect species face extinction. This is a serious cause for concern - insects pollinate a third of our food crops, and are the main food source of many birds, small mammals and fish. Loss of insect habitats and overuse of pesticides are two of the major causes of this impending devastation.

Action for Insects is a campaign led by the Wildlife Trusts, who hope to inspire and help people take action for insects where they live, learn, work and farm. They want policy makers to know that people care and want to see changes to protect our threatened insects. The Wildlife Trusts have produced an excellent downloadable guide, <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/action-insects-home>

This guide, from which these notes and tips have been taken, shows us us to make small changes in our homes, outdoor spaces and community, which make a difference by helping insects thrive throughout the year and encouraging them into our homes, gardens and communities. We need to create spaces where they can live, feed and breed and which help them to move around more easily. Different stages of the insect life cycle often need different habitats.

TIPS & Information to help you turn your home and garden into bee and insect-friendly havens

1. Value dead or dying plant material: Logs, old plant stems, and dried grass are all safe havens
2. Keep some grass long: A short-mown lawn doesn't provide shelter or much food for insects. Leave some areas untended. You will provide shelter for insects and save yourself work.
3. Allow 'insect safe' spaces: cracks in walls, rockery piles, corners of sheds. Build a bug hotel or leave a log pile. Plant in groups and provide insect-friendly shelters around the garden.
4. Choose plants that provide food for insects Prioritise nectar-rich flowers. Plan our planting so there is something in flower, leaf or fruit throughout the year.
5. Keep hard landscaping like decking and paving to a minimum. Talk with your neighbours and link up habitats - leave gaps under fences and allow trees / hedges to cross over boundaries.
6. Go peat free: This vital habitat cannot just be replaced as it takes thousands of years to form. Before you buy compost, always ensure it is peat-free.
7. Know where your seeds come from: Organic certified seeds are produced without chemical pesticides or fertilisers. Purchase seeds from organisations working to increase biodiversity.
8. Mix your planting. Grow flowers amongst our veg or locate a weed patch nearby will attract beneficial insects, such as hoverflies, lacewings and ladybirds, which eat aphids and blackfly.
9. Create food and shelter for hedgehogs, frogs, birds and other small mammals. They will feed on slugs and snails.

Gardening without chemicals: Pesticides and other harmful chemicals are designed to kill a wide range of organisms including insects and plants. Weed killers and insecticides are freely available to buy but they harm insects and destroy the habitat they rely upon. Growing without harmful chemicals takes a bit more thought and planning, but it can be done. Garden Organic has a wealth of information on pesticide-free alternatives and Pesticide Action Network UK have a guide to gardening without pesticides

Light Pollution in Gardens: How you use lighting in your home and gardens can have a BIG impact on insects and on our wildlife. Nocturnal insects, including moths, can become disoriented by artificial light. Evidence suggests that all forms of artificial lighting (including LEDs and halogen) can impact wildlife. They prefer to be kept in the dark.