

GUIDANCE

# **WILDLIFE FRIENDLY GARDENS**



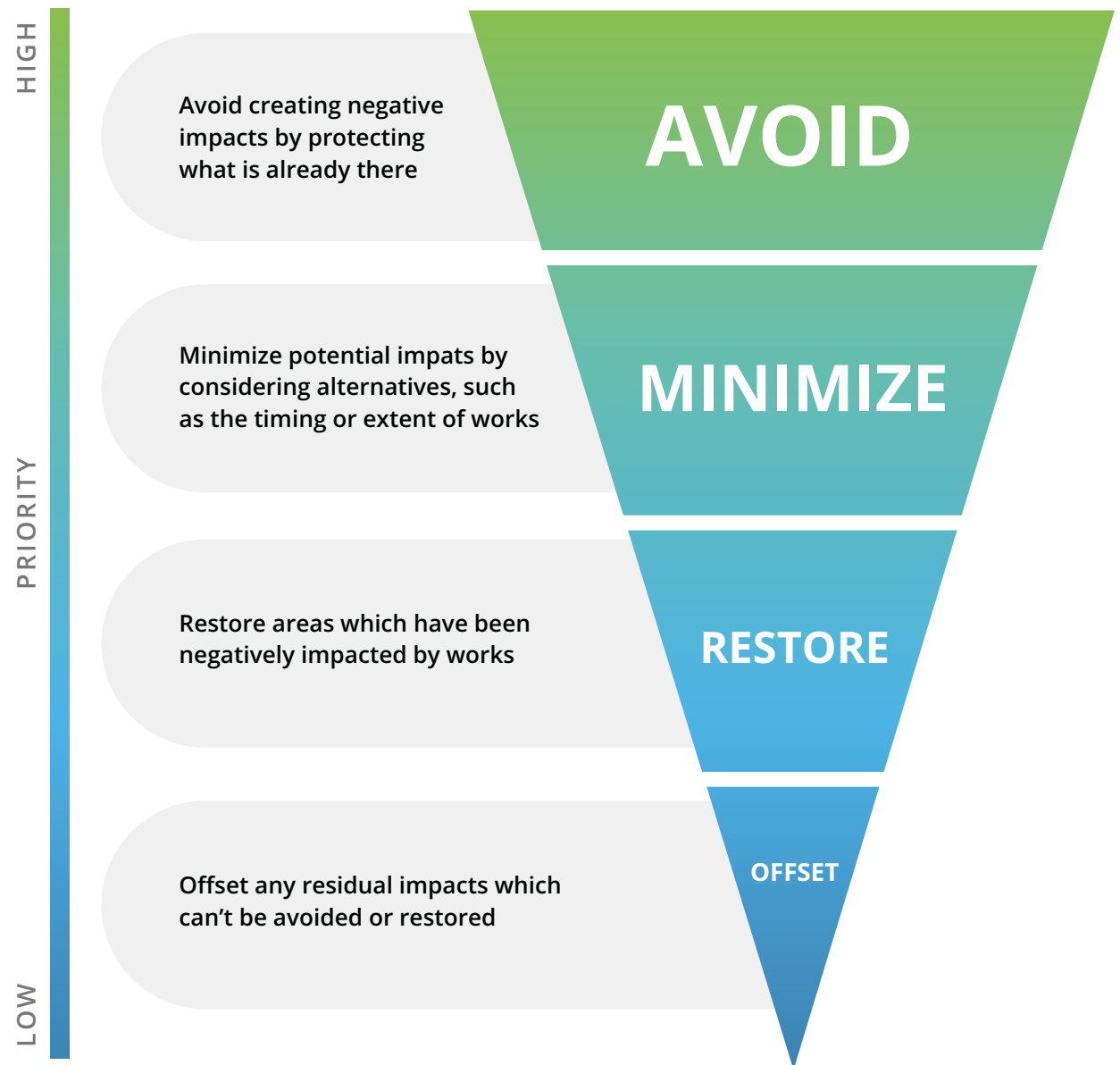
States of Guernsey  
Agriculture, Countryside and  
Land Management Services

# WHAT IS THERE ALREADY?

Your garden may already be home to wildlife. Look out for native hedgerows, existing trees, ponds and well-established grasslands (i.e. they haven't been rotovated for at least 8-10 years). Compost heaps and rock piles can also provide habitat for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

All these habitats may already support important wildlife and it is always better to look after what is already there, rather than starting from scratch.

When planning a development or any changes to your garden, it's important to remember the mitigation hierarchy for wildlife which can help reduce the impact of development on biodiversity



Identifying wildlife in your garden is an important first step towards protecting it and providing it with a home. A good guide for identifying some British wildlife can be found on The [Woodland trust website](#) although due to Guernsey's unique nature, there may be a few differences! If you're not sure if something in your garden may be an important home for wildlife, contact one of the local experts.

You might also want to contact the local biological records centre about what you have found in your garden. Sharing those records help decision makers and conservationists better understand how our wildlife is fairing and whether they need a helping hand. You can submit your sightings at [biologicalrecordscentre@gov.gg](mailto:biologicalrecordscentre@gov.gg). You can also take a look at the citizen science projects you could get involved in, to help your sightings have even further reach.



A natural history society with 12 different sections. The secretaries and members of those sections are experts on different topics, including birds, wild flowers and invertebrates.



A not-for-profit consultancy firm who can provide guidance on how best to manage your garden for nature



A charity which specialises in protecting local pollinators and their habitats who can provide advice on making your garden more pollinator friendly.



A local charity which aims to preserve and enhance Guernsey's heritage and its natural beauty.



The Guernsey Biological Records Centre holds records of species and habitats found in Guernsey. They can help to advise on species identification and what species to look out for in your garden.



A local charity which encourages the protection, preservation and planting of trees and educates on their importance. They can offer guidance on planting native species of tree and hedge.

# HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GARDEN

## PROTECT YOUR PLANTS

### Plant a native hedgerow

Hedges that are planted using species which are native to the island have much higher wildlife value than those planted with non-native species. Hedges provide corridors for wildlife to move along and support a host of animals which can live within the hedges, such as butterflies and garden birds. Native species of hedgerow include hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn, hornbeam, elder and gorse. For the greatest benefit, be sure to include a good mix of species within your hedge.

### Plant native trees

The benefits of trees are almost countless; as well as providing a home for wildlife, trees can also improve mental health and wellbeing, improve air quality, reduce flood risk, reduce wind speed, provide a shading effect in summer, they've even been found to increase the value of a property by 10-20%! To maximize the value of the trees to wildlife, be sure to plant native trees, such as English oak, ash, common alder, small leaved lime, and silver birch, which will likely be home to many more plants and animals.

(Whilst not native, many species of fruit tree or fruiting bushes can make a great addition to a garden, providing flowers for pollinators in the spring, and fruit for birds in the autumn).

For more information on planting trees and shrubs contact [Guernsey Tree's for Life](#).

### Plant native or pollinator friendly flowers

You can welcome wildlife into even the most formal of borders by making simple changes to the plants you choose. Consider using native species which will support the widest range of local pollinators. [Grow Guernsey Natives](#) are growing attractive native plants perfect for the garden.

You could also choose pollinator friendly species. These are plants perfect for your garden which will give your garden a biodiversity boost and provide food for local pollinators.

[The Pollinator Project](#) have some great suggestions.

Be sure to avoid planting invasive species, which could escape your garden and spread into the wild. The [Non-Native Species Secretariat](#) have produced a handy leaflet to provide more information on how you can garden without harmful invasives.

### Go chemical free

Giving up pesticides is a great way of saving money, and also saving the wildlife in your garden. Many of the chemicals used in gardens can have an impact on the species you may not want to target. There are some great alternatives to pesticides and other chemicals. Check out the [Gardening without Pesticides Guide](#) for more information.

## Keep it real!

When it comes to gardens, natural is always best. Try to stay away from artificial grass or hard standings which does not provide any habitat for wildlife, including wildflowers, earthworms, or pollinators - or the birds and bats which feed upon them.

## Lovely lawns

Lawns are often the largest component of any garden, but if they're managed to create a 'manicured' lawn, will often be inhospitable to wildlife. Firstly consider if you can give over some of your lawn to wildlife, either wildflowers, shrubs, or re-wilding. The remaining lawn area can be improved for wildlife by managing it carefully;

- Avoid using herbicides and embrace the wildflowers in your lawn.
- Avoid using fertilizers – if you've already cut out herbicides, you may find that clover is doing the same job!
- Reduce the cutting frequency so that the lawn can grow a little longer. When you do cut your lawn, be sure to rake up the cuttings and pop them in the compost heap.

- Consider participating in No Mow May, where lawns are left uncut for the whole month of May which allows wildflowers to grow and provide food for pollinators at an especially important time of the year. At the end of the month, you can take part in their survey to measure the value of your lawn to pollinators... a great activity for children (and those young at heart!). And if you enjoy No Mow May, why not try Let it Bloom June or Knee High July?

## Re-wild a section of your garden

Re-wilding a section of your garden makes room for nature to come back and is a relatively low effort and cost-effective way of providing space for biodiversity. Simply cut the vegetation once a year, and for the other 11 ½ months of the year leave it alone and let nature take over. You might need to control some particularly boisterous plants (such as brambles) or any invasive species (such as Spanish bluebells or montbretia). You're likely to see tall grasses and plants, like red campion, common nettle and plantain grow, which in turn will provide habitats for wildlife such as red admiral butterflies, bumble bees and other pollinators.

# WELCOME IN WILDLIFE

## Creating a pond is one of the best ways to encourage wildlife into your garden.

As an Island Guernsey lacks many freshwater habitats for wildlife and ponds can provide vital resources for many organisms. Make sure there are plenty of shallow areas, lots of native plants (beware of invasive non-natives which can take over a pond!) and remember to install a wildlife ramp to give anything that falls in help to get out. The Wildlife Trusts have produced a useful guide to pond creation which can be found on [their website](#).

## Create a hedgehog highway in your garden's boundary.

If your garden is surrounded by a solid boundary, be that a fence or a wall, you could consider creating a hedgehog highway by cutting a 15cm X 15cm hole in the bottom. This will allow hedgehogs to roam a larger area and hopefully avoid main roads, and in turn they'll help by eating the slugs and snails in your garden.



## **Install bird and bat boxes and bug hotels in your garden.**

These artificial habitats can provide a home for wildlife, and in turn the wildlife in your garden will perform ecosystem services such as pollinating your plants and reducing pests. But don't forget that as well as a home to live, wildlife will also need food, so be sure to include wild patches and native plants too!

### **Create a compost heap**

Compost heaps can be a home to a wide range of wildlife, such as slow worms, hedgehogs, and frogs (all of which also make great wild 'pest controllers!'). Consider setting up a compost heap in your garden for your vegetable waste, garden cuttings, and cardboard. You'll even be rewarded with a useful product which can save you money and means you can avoid buying peat compost. The Soil Farm are our local experts on all things compost, so get in touch with them to find out more.



## EXAMPLE SMALL GARDEN

It's possible to enhance biodiversity in even the smallest spaces. Below is an example of just what can be achieved in a small garden.



### Native Planting Scheme

If you have a hedge, make sure it's made from native species. And try to incorporate some native or pollinator friendly wildflowers in your borders, pots or even a window box.

### No Mow May

Park your lawn mower for the month to allow wildflowers in the seed bank in your lawn to grow and flower. You might be surprised by what pops up.

### Hedgehog Highway

A 15cm by 15cm hole in boundary fences or walls to allow connectivity between neighbouring gardens so wildlife is free to move around looking for food and shelter.

### Bug Hotel

Even the smallest bug hotel can provide habitat and homes for invertebrates to thrive, just make sure it has lots of nooks and crannies for bugs to live in.

Try combining homes for other wildlife to save on space, you could even turn the roof of your bug hotel into a raised bed for growing wild flowers or vegetables.

If you're really short of space you can create a bug hotel in a tin can.

### No Pesticides or Herbicides

No matter how large or small your garden, be sure to avoid using pesticides and give those pollinators a boost. If you want areas free of grass or flowers, try mechanical weeding instead.

### Pond

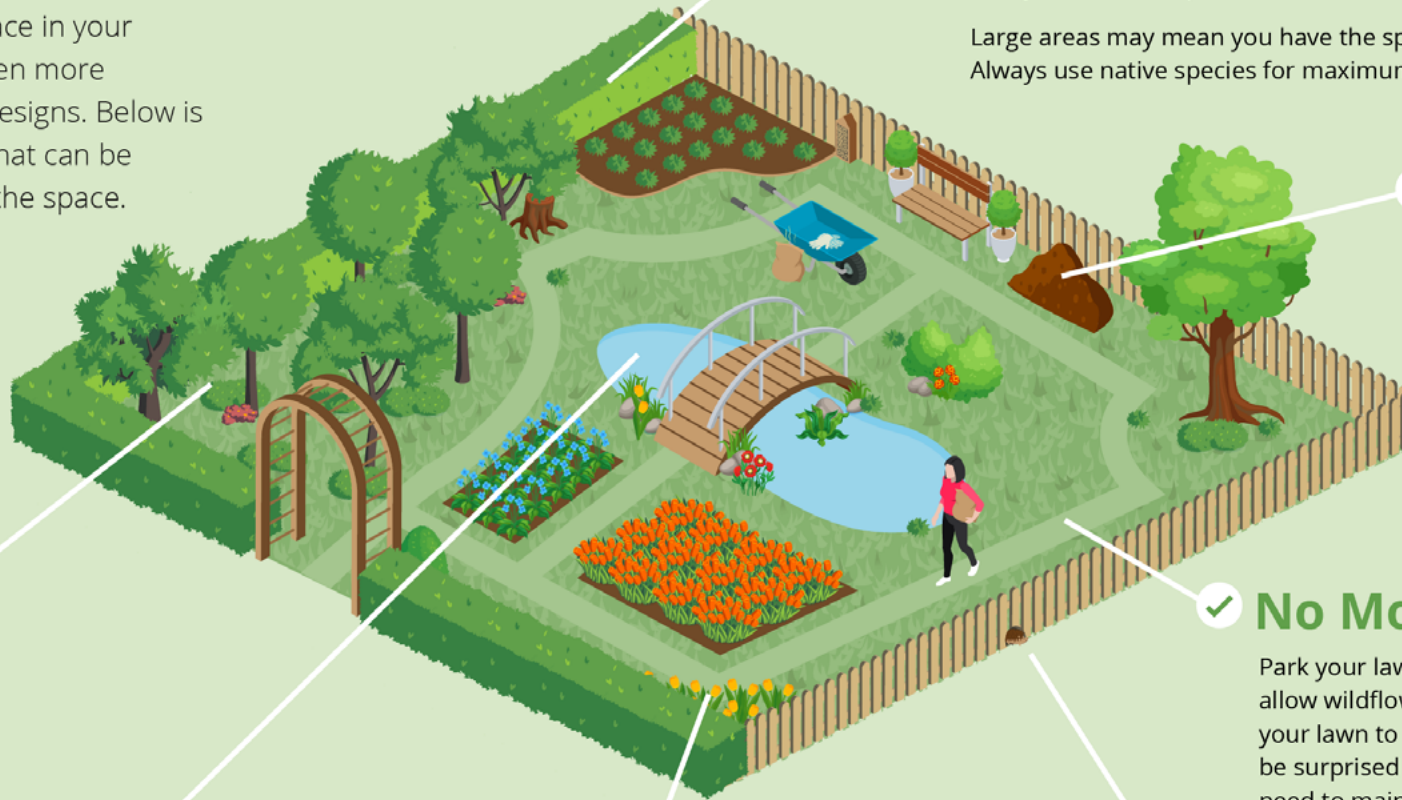
This is one of the best ways to encourage biodiversity in your garden. In a small garden this can simply be made out of a bucket or small basin and enhanced with some native pond plants.



## EXAMPLE

### LARGE GARDEN

If you've got lots of space in your garden, you can be even more ambitious with your designs. Below is one example of just what can be achieved if you've got the space.



### Native Planting Scheme

Ensure that hedging is made from native species and incorporate native or pollinator friendly wildflowers in your planting scheme. Large areas may mean you have the space to create a woodland. Always use native species for maximum wildlife value!

Large areas may mean you have the space to create a woodland. Always use native species for maximum wildlife value!

### Compost Heap

Find a corner for a compost heap where you can place your bin or container straight on the ground, which will allow worms to move in and do their job.

### No Mow May

Park your lawn mower for the month to allow wildflowers in the seed bank in your lawn to grow and flower. You might be surprised by what pops up. If you need to maintain access, try mowing in footpaths and access strips.

### No Pesticides or Herbicides

No matter how large or small your garden, be sure to avoid using pesticides and give those pollinators a boost. If you want areas free of grass or flowers, try mechanical weeding instead.

### Hedgehog Highway

A 15cm by 15cm holes in boundary fences or walls to allow connectivity between neighbouring gardens so wildlife is free to move around looking for food and shelter.

### Re-wilding

If your garden is large enough you could let a section of it go wild. This is one of the best things you can do for nature in your garden as it provides a range of habitats for plants and wildlife. It is also the lowest maintenance method of gardening as all you have to do is let nature take its course!

### Pond

In a larger garden, a pond dug into the ground with varying depths from shallow to deep and a good native planting scheme can make an attractive feature in a garden and hosts loads of native wildlife!



# PLANTING SCHEME

## Soil types in your garden

The soil type of your garden will have a large influence over what will grow well, or what may struggle. This is because some plants grow better in different soils and some wildlife is adapted to live in varying conditions. One of the best ways to ensure that your planting scheme will work for your garden, and encourage the most amount of wildlife, is to look at natural areas in your vicinity to see what is growing there naturally then base your planting scheme around this. Just be sure to avoid any potentially invasive species!

## By the Sea

Gardens near the sea can often suffer from salty, dry and sandy soil and many typical garden plants can struggle in these conditions. There are many attractive native plant species that will not only thrive in these conditions, but will also support a wealth of native wildlife, such as thrift, sea kale and sea holly. For hedging, gorse and blackthorn are well adapted to salty soils and can be effective wind breaks to allow other plants to establish.

If you want to have plants in your garden that require better soil, then try using planters and pots to hold compost and soil in. Or, you might want to try and improve the soil condition in some of your flower beds are reduce the water loss through the free draining sandy soil. Try using a mulch like woodchip on top of your soil to lock in some moisture or by improving the soil by digging in organic matter to improve water retention.

### Species you could plant



Wild Thyme



Birds-Foot Trefoil



Rest Harrow



Wild Carrot



Bulbous Buttercup



Yarrow



Lady's Bedstraw



Early Forget-me-not



Sea Campion



Sea Pink

## Dry

Guernsey's dry areas of soil away from the influence of the sea are mainly made up of silty and acidic soil. This means that many plants that prefer calcareous or neutral soils can often struggle to grow in this environment. But there are several native species that are perfectly adapted to these soils.

### Species you could plant



Yarrow



Ox-eye Daisy



White Clover



Red Clover



Knapweed



Selfheal



Meadow Buttercup



Bluebell (English)



Birds-Foot Trefoil



Dog Violet

## Wet

If you live in a wetter area in land and not influenced by the sea then the soil is likely to be acidic, but will hold and retain water for large parts of the year. This may be caused by flushes, wet valleys or low-lying wetlands that sit close to the water table. There are lots of species in Guernsey which are perfectly adapted to these wet soils and many make a very attractive addition to a garden, as well as enhancing the biodiversity.

### Species you could plant



Lesser  
Spearwort



Water  
Mint



Red  
Clover



Yellow  
Bartsia



Ragged  
Robbin



Amphibious  
Bistort



Cuckoo  
Flower



Yellow  
Flag Iris





# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The wildlife already living in your garden may be afforded protection under the Animal Welfare ordinance (2012). To help prevent breaching this law, we recommend that you seek advice before undertaking work on mature trees at any time of year, and avoid clearing woody vegetation (such as hedging or large shrubs) during the bird breeding season (March – July).



# FURTHER INFORMATION



**Welcome to Guernsey Trees for Life - Men of the Trees**



**Guernsey Biological Records Centre**



**Gardening for Bats - Advice - Bat Conservation Trust**



**Non Native Species**



**La Societe Guernesiaise - Guernsey's Natural History, Research and Conservation Society**



**Pollinator Guernsey Project**



**How to build a pond | The Wildlife Trusts**



**How to Identify Wildlife - UK Species - Woodland Trust**



The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of numerous warm, golden-brown lights, likely from a city at night or a festival, creating a bokeh effect. The lights are out of focus, appearing as glowing circles of varying sizes against a dark background.

# GUIDANCE

# **BIODIVERSITY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**



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# WHAT IS THERE ALREADY?

Some wildlife is dependent on built structures and, because they are specialists, these animals are some of the islands most endangered species.

Swifts, swallows, house martins, barn owls, house sparrows and starlings are all known to nest in or on buildings.

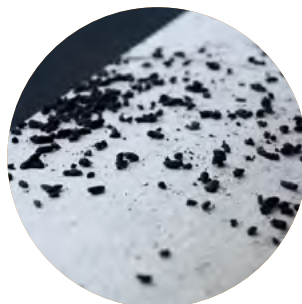
Swifts are particularly sensitive to change in the urban environment as they tend to return every year to the same roost and are reluctant to nest elsewhere. If a swift is disturbed, by development or a change in their roost entrance, they may fail to breed that year.

The island is also home to several species of bat, many of which rely on the built environment to roost. The sites where they give birth to and rear their young (nursery roosts) or hibernate (hibernaculum) need very particular environmental conditions, so it's important that if they are roosting in a building, that those roosts aren't damaged.

Look around your house and outbuildings for signs that they're already home to wildlife



**Look out for nests** of species such as house martins or swallows, who build their nests on the side of buildings (the RSPB and British Trust for Ornithology have lots of great information to help you identify nests)



The roosts and nests of others, such as bats and swifts, can be harder to spot as they might be in roof space or small cavities and accessed through very small openings.

**Look out for droppings** in attics or on window ledges (bat droppings look similar to mouse droppings, but will crumble with a small amount of pressure) or birds or bats flying around at dusk.

If you have doubt whether there are bats or birds in your buildings, we encourage you to contact a local expert or ecological consultant for advice before undertaking any works (see section 3 below for information on potential legal considerations).

# HOW TO IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY IN YOUR HOME

There are lots of clever ways you can improve the biodiversity of existing or new buildings. Not least to make sure it's as carbon neutral as possible through its design and construction. Building Control have issued local guidance on requirements in Guernsey, but you can also look at the UK Governments [Net Zero and Sustainability Design Guide](#) for more information.

To achieve the most benefit for wildlife and the least visual impact to your development, make sure that you consider including the measures, such as artificial nests, early on in the design stages of your development.

RIBA Publishing and the Bat Conservation Trust have produced a comprehensive guide [Designing for Biodiversity](#) which details which improvements can be made and how to consider them in the design and construction phases of a development.

## BATS

Different species of bat have different roost requirements. Grey long eared bats need large open spaces to roost in, so they can fly around before emerging at night, while common pipistrelles make use of small crevices or gaps.

The best roost for a bat is one they are already using, but you can also build new roosts into a development or attach bat boxes to existing buildings to offer them additional roosting space. The Bat Section of La Société Guernesiale have produced a detailed guide to bat boxes in Guernsey, which is available on their [Facebook page](#).

You can also make sure that your home is as suitable for bats as possible by



retaining or including access to voids in roofs or attics and gaps behind soffit boards and fasciae.

Be sure to use bat friendly roofing membranes, non-toxic wood treatment, and to reduce lighting sources around your property – all of which, if not carefully considered, can be harmful to bats. See the [Bat Conservation Trust website](#) for more guidance.

If you need to install outdoor lights, make sure that they are not shining on features where you may find a bat roost, and consider using motion sensors so that they aren't on when they're not needed.





## GREEN ROOFS

Green roofs are a good way of increasing biodiversity on space that otherwise does not offer wildlife value. The most common type of green roof is one made from the plant sedum, they're light, hardy and require very little maintenance.

Not only will it provide habitat for invertebrates and birds, but it also helps slow down water flow and retain moisture and help regulate temperatures inside the building.

If your building can support a greater weight on your roof, consider a roof garden that is topped with low nutrient soil and sown with wildflowers. A variety of wildflowers should be sown so that the flowering period and therefore access to nectar for pollinators is extended. It is important that the soils used are nutrient poor as it avoids particularly vigorous species becoming dominant (which will require more maintenance!) and maintains a higher diversity of wildflowers.

Consider including climbing plants in your landscaping scheme. Plants, such as wisteria or honeysuckle, grown on the sunny side of buildings can provide food for pollinators and shelter for birds and insects as well as helping regulate temperatures inside the building. And of course, they can look great!

## GREEN WALLS

For more information on how to encourage wildlife into your garden, read our Wildlife Friendly Gardens guidance.



# LEGAL

## CONSIDERATIONS

The wildlife already living in or around your house may be afforded protection under the Animal Welfare Ordinance (2012). To help prevent breaching this law, we recommend that you seek advice before undertaking any work on roofs, fasciae, or soffit boards.

You should also check that any planned improvements to your home adhere to the Planning and Building Control regulations.



# FURTHER INFORMATION



**Biodiversity in new housing developments:  
creating wildlife-friendly communities - NHBC**



**Detention basins, ponds and wetlands in  
Sustainable Drainage Systems**



**Sustainability and Net Zero**



**Designing for Biodiversity: a guide for new and  
existing buildings - Bats Conservation Trust**



**Bat Boxes - Buildings, planning and development  
- Bat Conservation Trust**