



Top Tips For helping Winter Wildlife

Look out for your Wildlife in the winter

When we think of wildlife-friendly gardens we usually think of summer nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies. But these creatures, and other wildlife, also need some help in the winter. Bumble bees, adult butterflies and many other insects hibernate over winter and emerge in the spring to lay their eggs for the next generation. So providing suitable hibernation places for them is crucial; what they need are dry, sheltered, undisturbed places and our sheds and garages are often perfect for them. You can also stuff old clay plant pots or wooden boxes with straw, dry leaves or short lengths of bamboo canes and put them in a dry, quiet corner of your garden.

Remember that just leaving a pile of leaves at the back of your borders or behind your shed will create an ideal hibernation area for hedgehogs, frogs and a wide range of insects. So don't tidy up your garden too much if you want to share it with the local wildlife!

Birds don't hibernate at all, so those that don't migrate to warm climates need food during the winter; you can plant shrubs, trees and hedges with winter berries that sustain birds during the winter. Good species to use are Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Holly, Ivy (let it flower to produce nectar and berries), Honeysuckle, Cotoneaster, Elder and Pyracantha.



Winter flowering plants can provide nectar for any insects that emerge on warm days, and these usually have a great scent for our appreciation too! These include



Chimonanthus praecox - Wintersweet



Erica - Winter-flowering Heathers



Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn'



Hamamelis - Witch Hazel

To help wildlife in the winter you can also think about reducing the amount of sprays and insecticides you use during the summer; if you kill off too many insects and their eggs, the birds have less to eat in your garden during the winter. The ideal garden has a balance of predators and prey from the insect and animal world, in the long run this will benefit your plants as well as your local wildlife. So only use sprays if they are absolutely necessary, or thinking about growing only hardy plants that are pest and disease resistant and don't need chemical sprays to keep them healthy and attractive.

If you have a pond in your garden, you can stop it freezing over completely by placing a pan of hot water on the surface on the days that it freezes. This will allow wildlife to move in and out of the water and drink. Do not crack the ice as this will send shock waves through the water and disturb the wildlife in it.