

Gardening club

with DAVID DOMONEY

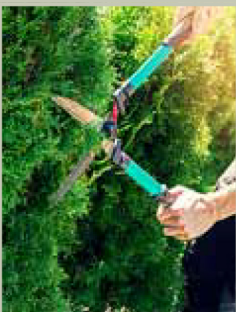
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Q&A



Time to spring into action for next year

» I want to get organised for next spring. What should I plant? **Sally L, via email**
DAVID: Biennials take two years to complete their biological lifecycle, so in order to grow spring bedding for next year, wallflowers, pansies and *Bellis perennis* need to be sown between May and July if you want to be sure of them flowering in the spring.



Nesting birds must not be disturbed

» Will cutting back my conifer hedge harm the birds? **Felicity, Diss, Norfolk**
DAVID: With conifer hedges, trimming after August can encourage bare patches, so cut earlier in the season. But make sure you check for nesting birds - it's an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 to destroy wild bird nests while in use between the months of March and August.

TIP of the week

If you're low on space, or even pots, grow tomatoes and basil together for a summer dish in one container.

GET IN TOUCH

For loads more hints and tips on gardening, visit daviddomoney.com or follow me on Facebook at @DavidDomoneyTV or on Twitter @daviddomoney.

Make your garden a haven for visiting creatures to help halt declining numbers - and they'll be sure to give back as much as they get

Summer is here and our gardens are packed with fluttering butterflies, humming bees and - if you're lucky - hedgehogs, amphibians and beetles too.

With private gardens in the UK comprising some 667,000 acres, embracing wildlife as a gardener can have a real impact on declining populations. Your new friends can also work wonders for your garden, so here's how to keep them visiting:

BUSY BEES AND BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLIES

Bees and butterflies are an important part of our eco-system. They pollinate food crops, homegrown flowers and wild plant species. But populations of some bees and butterflies are in real decline due to loss of habitat and use of pesticides.

If we garden with pollinators in mind though, we can offer them a nutritious platter of pesticide-free nectar and pollen that will bolster their numbers for years to come.

Plant pollinator-friendly early and late-flowering plants to feed pollinators in the leaner months of the year.

Hedera helix (ivy), *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower), *Digi-*

talus (foxgloves) and *Galanthus nivalis* (common snowdrop) are all big hits.

Look out for the RHS's 'Plants for Pollinators' logo to identify plants - purple-flowering ones are generally favourites for bees.

Take care with pesticides. Avoid 'systemic' or 'translocated' pesticides, which get into nectar and pollen and harm pollinators. If using other kinds, don't spray plants that are in open flower to help limit contact with pollinators or use non-chemical sprays, such as detergent or neem oil.

Provide nesting sites. Put up a bee hotel for solitary bees such as mason, leafcutter and yellow-faced bees that nest in hollow stems. Creating a nettle patch will provide an easy food source for Peacock, Comma and Tortoiseshell butterfly caterpillars.

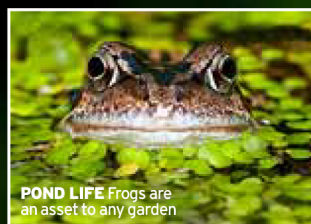
HAPPY HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs are also great garden helpers. They eat slugs and snails, so they're fantastic protectors of our prize blooms. There are plenty of ways to support these garden bouncers.

Create a hedgehog highway. To find enough food, hedgehogs need to travel around two miles a night. Open up your garden for hedgehog habitat by cutting a 13cm hole into the



ECO-FRIEND Make a space to welcome some hedgehogs



POND LIFE Frogs are an asset to any garden



POLLINATOR Bumblebee in a foxglove

Get the wildlife bug



HAVENLY Try to attract butterflies to your garden

bottom of garden fences or install hedgerows as permeable boundaries.

Hedgehogs need safe spaces to shelter and raise litters of hoglets. Make or buy a hedgehog house and pop it in a sheltered location beneath a hedgerow, surrounded by nesting materials, such as dry leaves and straw, to attract hedgehog occupants.

Put out food and water. White

meat-flavoured cat or dog food in jelly is the perfect nourishment and can be left out alongside a shallow dish of fresh water. Put food out at dusk and clear leftovers in the morning. Go to britishhedgehogs.org.uk for more.

AMIALE AMPHIBIANS

If you have a pond in your garden, you can support frogs, toads and newts with a few simple adjustments. In

return, they clear ponds of algae and eat pests such as slugs and snails to keep your plants safe from attack.

Water is an amphibian's best friend. Installing a pond with a shallower section for toads and a deeper section for frogs and newts will attract a variety of species to your garden.

Adding a water-retentive membrane two to three feet beneath the soil will

create a great wetland area. Plant it out with a range of tall and short bog plants, such as ground-hugging *Lysimachia nummularia* (creeping jenny) and proud iris ensata (Japanese water iris), for maximum impact.

Make a mess! Gardeners who let things go wild in parts of the garden - with log piles here, wild grass there and leaf litter strewn through borders

- are actually providing shelter for amphibians and hedgehogs and encouraging creepy-crawlies into the garden as food sources.

BENEFICIAL BEETLES

Britain is home to a whopping 1,350 species of predatory beetle that feed on garden pests such as slugs, cabbage worms and asparagus beetles.

Supporting these beetles in your garden is both easy and highly beneficial, whether you're growing your own produce or aiming for a festival of colourful flowers.

Many measures already recommended, such as log piles and pesticide reduction, will help beneficial beetles. One further measure is to spread leaf litter or organic mulch through garden borders to provide egg-laying sites for beetles.

It is especially helpful to mulch plants, such as *Hostas*, that you water regularly as beetle larvae love a damp environment.

Follow these tips to attract and support beneficial wildlife in your garden and create a thriving haven that helps your garden plants.

Colourful



GOING POTTY Sophie, in green, with kids

campaign is enthralling kids

This year's Cultivation Street campaign has led to 15,000 Calliope® plug plants being dispatched to schools and community groups across the UK.

We have to say a massive thank you to the incredible garden centre staff who have gone above and beyond their duty to get the geraniums out to some 1,250 organisations.

Stories have been pouring in of how they have lovingly potted on the plug plants and tended them until the schools and communities were ready to receive them. One such ambassador is Sophie Menjou, from Haskins garden



centre, Southampton. She has seen first-hand how these colourful plants have helped local children engage with the natural world.

Sophie says: "The schools have been extremely grateful for the Calliope geraniums. We supported the children in the planting and it was a great opportunity to encourage them to look at the roots and discuss how they think

the plants will grow. They enjoyed smelling the leaves, and each took a turn at guessing what colour the flowers will be. The children have promised to keep them well-watered!"

Sophie goes on to explain how being part of the Cultivation Street campaign has helped her interact with her local community.

"We've been able to make people in the community more aware of the help that's available for their school projects," she says.

For more information, go to cultivationstreet.com

GADGET



Whether you've got a hosepipe or not, having a really sturdy watering can is a garden must. This "Dig for Victory" litre can in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum would make a lovely addition to any gardener's kit. It's a charming retro-style with an elegant spout and ideal for both outdoor and indoor watering. From £19.99 via ocado.com