



#TeamWilder Community Toolkit: Taking action

All geared up to get going? This toolkit will help you to involve others and work together to take action in your community.

We also have a suite of toolkits which focus on practical action that you can take to help wildlife by providing food, shelter, water, and connectivity for nature in your outdoor space, as well information on how best to manage your land for wildlife.

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1. Partnership working – getting started

Working in partnership with others is by far the best way to make a bigger difference in your community.

Who could you work with?

Start by talking to your neighbours or people you know within your community. Do you have a Facebook group for your area that you can use to reach out to people? Find out about different organisations or groups operating in your area and get in touch with them to explore possibilities of working together. By chatting to people and agencies who have strong relationships with communities in your area you will be able to find out who you need to get on board and who can help you.

- Think about who might be interested in what you are doing?
- Who might be impacted by what you are planning to do?
- Who has the knowledge, contacts, or influence?
- Is there anyone currently under-represented in your planning so far?

Diversity is vital as different organisations and people can bring different perspectives and find surprising mutual benefit in working together.

The best thing to do is to connect with people around you, chat to people and listen to find out how they feel about your area and the issues or ideas you would like to take action on.



2. How to carry out a litter pick

Whether you're wanting to carry out a litter pick in your park or a beach clean in your local area, we've compiled some advice as to how to do this safely.

Equipment:

- Thick gardening gloves
- Strong bin bags
- A litter picker
- A high-vis vest or brightly coloured clothing (for visibility near roads)
- Suitable clothing (*e.g.*, plenty of layers in case it's cold, or suncream and a hat if it's sunny)
- Suitable footwear (*e.g.*, sturdy boots for rocky beaches)
- Hand sanitiser

Litter picking equipment can be borrowed from many [local authorities](#). Equipment can also be purchased for [individuals](#) or for [groups](#) from Keep Britain Tidy.

Before Your Litter Pick:

Before carrying out a litter pick, be sure that you have taken the weather into consideration, along with the tide times if you are undertaking a beach clean, and that you have plenty of water with you to drink.

Make sure to take regular breaks and only carry out what is within your personal capabilities. Those under the age of 18 years old should be supervised by a responsible adult at all times during a litter pick. Before going onto any land, make sure that you have permission from the landowner. If you are attending an organised clean-up, the organiser should have done this in advance.

Health and Safety:

If you attend an organised litter pick, your organiser should have undertaken a risk assessment and should provide you with a safety briefing. The organiser should be first-aided trained and have a first aid kit with them.

If you are organising a litter pick with the public, ensure that you have public liability insurance in place to protect yourself and the group.

Always ask the organiser of the litter pick or a responsible adult if you're not sure whether something is safe to pick up. Dangerous, poisonous, or hazardous items should be reported to the Environment Agency on 0800 807 060. Never lift anything too heavy for you; heavy items should instead be reported and removed by the local council. Ensure you always wear thick gloves and cover any cuts, no matter how small, with a waterproof plaster. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth while litter picking and make sure to wash your hands afterwards, particularly before eating, drinking, smoking, or using the toilet.



Things to avoid:

- **Sharp objects such as broken glass** – these should be collected in separate containers, not rubbish bags.
- **Medical waste such as needles or syringes.** Do not attempt to move these yourself – make a note of their location and inform your local council.
- **Potentially hazardous items**, including unidentified canisters, oil drums, chemical containers and bottles of liquid.
- **Dead animals** – report any dead whales or dolphins to Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (0800 652 0333) or other dead animals to the local authority.
- **Live animals** – report any live strandings to British Divers Marine Life Rescue (01825 765546) or other injured animals to RSPCA (0300 1234999).
- **Hazardous areas** such as steep or unstable banks, derelict buildings, busy roads, or near fast flowing or deep water.
- **Working alone** – stay within sight and earshot of others or, if litter picking alone, let someone know where you've gone and what time to expect you back.

Disposing of Your Litter:

Try not to overfill your rubbish bags to avoid the bags splitting. If possible, separate your litter into different bags for recycling, such as:

- Plastic bottles
- Glass
- Cans
- Paper
- General waste

All waste should either be placed securely in a public bin or collected by the local authority.

If you do plan to collect a large amount of litter, speak to your local authority in advance of your litter pick to get advice about what to do with it. If you have arranged for the waste to be collected by the local authority, make sure all bags are securely closed and left in the agreed location. As a last resort, rubbish collected during a litter pick can be transported in a private vehicle to a local household waste recycling site, however you must make sure that the site can accept the waste.

Credit to Keep Britain Tidy, Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership and Wildlife Watch.

3. Working with landowners to improve a green space for wildlife

- **Have you got your eye on a patch of land in your area?**



- Do you think it would be a great space to grow some vegetables or herbs for the local community?
- Do you want to turn it into a wildflower haven for bees and insects?
- Do you think it needs a bench and a bit of a tidy-up?

Find out who owns it:

Ask your Local Authority (council). Find out who your Local Authority is by clicking this link and entering your postcode: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Go to their website and send an email to their enquiries email or planning email or ring them. They might have their own deeds records or County Record Office.

If the Local Authority doesn't know, then simply ask the local shops, businesses, and houses.

Around 85% of the land in the UK is registered with the Land Registry. It will cost £3 to do an online search. Click here: <https://www.gov.uk/search-property-information-land-registry>

As your patch of land won't have an address, you'll need to do a map search. You can use the online map, and if you want to double-check, you can ask for an "index map search."

Index map search:

An index map search costs £4 and you need to submit form "SIM" with as much information as possible, and an Ordnance Survey map reference. Find out more here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/index-map-application-foran-official-search-sim>

You could also check the Land Registry records for the properties and land next to the land you're interested in, as sometimes they might say "plus the adjoining land" or similar.

Note that even if some land is not registered, it still doesn't mean that no-one owns it so don't assume you can just take it over. Do as much research as you can.

Do you want to buy it?

'Assets of Community Value' are buildings or land that are "mainly in actual use for the social, well-being or social interests of the local community". This can include parks and green space. If an Asset goes up for sale, then local people are allowed to come together and bid for control over it, by forming a Community Interest Group or other specified typed of group. Find out more here

<https://www.oss.org.uk/need-to-know-more/information-hub/community-assetsand-protecting-open-space/> and here <https://mycommunity.org.uk/communityassets-and-ownership>

Do you just want to use it?

You will need the landowner's permission. In some cases, there will also be a leaseholder who rents the land from the landowner: for example, a car parking company which rents land from the council. You'll need to talk to both the landowner and the leaseholder.



You might be asked for a risk assessment – see our separate guidance in our **#TeamWilder Community Toolkit – Managing Risk** and our **Example Risk Assessment**. They will probably want to see a plan for what you want to do, and they could want to do a “utilities survey” first. You definitely don’t want to dig through an electricity cable!

Do make sure there is a contract which states who is responsible for what, and for how long. It does not have to be complicated, but it does have to be clear. They may put restrictions in place, such as a ban on using power tools, or certain rules about how the land can be used.

Check with the planning department of your Local Authority about planning permission.

Simply growing food will be “agricultural” but if there’s a building on the land and you’re going to be doing other activities, it may need a change of use.

You will need to consider insurance such as public liability insurance. Talk to your Local Authority, and also see our **#TeamWilder Community Toolkit – Managing Risk**.

What’s your plan?

You will need to create a plan so that you know who is responsible for doing what.

You also need to know how this project will be sustained. Who will look after your plants/trees? What happens in winter? What happens next year?

Consider whether you will need a budget. You might need funds for insurance, tools, or publicity.

Finally, you’ll need a crisis plan or list of things to do in an emergency. What if something happens to the land that you’re responsible for? A fire, perhaps? Or someone critical to the project becomes ill or moves away. Come up with all the possibilities, and what you can do to stop them happening, or what you’d do if they did happen.

To help you to plan what actions you will take for nature on this land we have created comprehensive toolkits for providing food, shelter, water, and for the best way to manage your area and how to ensure it is well connected to the nature surrounding it.

Other useful links and resources:

The Open Spaces Society has very clear information about Assets of Community Value: <https://www.oss.org.uk/need-to-know-more/information-hub/community-assets-and-protecting-open-space/>

You can find out more about community assets and ownership on the My Community website, along with information on how to bid on assets: <https://mycommunity.org.uk/community-assets-and-ownership>

This document from My Community tells you more about Community Assets, bidding for ownership, and other ways to reclaim land: <https://mycommunity.org.uk/files/downloads/Parks-and-Green-Spaces-where-to-start-B.pdf>



The government has advice on reclaiming land: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-localism/2010-to-2015-government-policy-localism#appendix-5-community-right-to-reclaim-land>

4. Planting a mini community orchard

Careful consideration and discussion with your landowner and community will be needed to plan and design any tree planting scheme, and creating an orchard is no different. Consider who else you need to involve and reach out to your community to ask people for their views and ideas before you start digging.

The concept of communities coming together and creating orchards has become very popular - with such wide-ranging benefits for wildlife and people, there's no wonder! Perhaps you have a shared green space, community garden, or allotment that is crying out for some fruit trees to be planted?

With many miniature varieties of trees available, you don't need to have acres of land to create your own orchard. With the right plant selection and now how, you can turn even the smallest balcony into a productive fruit garden.

In this guide will give you our top tips for creating your very own wildlife friendly mini orchard - filled with your favourite freshly grown fruits.

Plant selection:

Today, there are many types of dwarf fruit trees available, however depending on the size of your outside space, you may wish to grow something bigger.

An important part of growing your own mini orchard is training your trees to remain small. With a dedicated pruning routine, it is possible to tame and grow heritage fruit trees to fit most spaces.

Top tip! Although orchards are most associated with fruit trees like apples and pears, there's nothing stopping you from growing nuts and berries in your orchard.

When deciding what to grow you should consider these factors: size and spacing, sunlight, pollination needs and soil quality. Involve your community in deciding which varieties to plant, this will create shared ownership and will lead to more support in taking care of the orchard long term.

Size and spacing:

When planning your orchard, you should consider how large each tree will be when it's fully grown and how much available space you have. As a rule of thumb, you should leave at least three feet between each tree in your orchard.

Available sunlight (also known as aspect):

Although most fruit trees prefer sunny conditions, some fruits, like gooseberries will grow in shade.



Spend time watching how the sun moves across your outside space throughout the day. Make note of the shady and sunny areas and plant your trees according to the amount of sun they need.

Pollination needs:

Flowers on fruit trees must be pollinated (receive pollen from another flower) to develop fruit. Some trees can pollenate themselves, whereas others need to receive pollen from another tree of the same species.

When planning your orchard, you should consider the pollination method of your chosen trees. If you plan on growing trees that are unable to self-pollinate, you may want to consider growing a second tree of the same species nearby - this will increase your chances of success.

Soil quality:

You should consider the acidity and or alkaline levels of your soil when planning your orchard and plant accordingly. Apple trees for example prefer neutral or slightly acidic soils.

Group your chosen trees together by their preferred soil types and remember most fruit trees will fare well in areas with deep, free-draining soil.

Planting your orchard:

Once you've selected your trees, you're ready to start planting.

Remember to invite all the people you have involved to come out and help plant the orchard you planned together. Perhaps you can create a group to share responsibility for the care of the fruit trees, then take it in turns to check on them and maintain them – you'll get to share the rewards of a successful harvest too!

See our guide to planting trees and hedges for more information and top tips in our **#TeamWilder Toolkit: Wildlife Actions – Growing Shelter.**

Looking after your orchard:

Your orchard will need extra care until it's fully established. Whilst your trees are growing you should; regularly prune them, mulch your soil to help it retain moisture and water when needed.

More useful information can be found here: <https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/>

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