



**Yorkshire**  
Wildlife Trust



# Wildlife Gardening in Action

## CASE STUDY: The Open Country Allotment Group

### Describe your garden/outdoor space before you started gardening with wildlife in mind:

When we first acquired our plot over 12 years ago, the allotments were new, so it was just a ploughed field with very little wildlife value. There were some great features on the field edge though, including a mature, species-rich hedge and a couple of very old oak trees.

### How did you get started on your wildlife gardening journey?

We have a keen interest in wildlife and nature and so it came naturally to us to garden for wildlife alongside growing fruit and vegetables. We started with small steps, such as putting up bird boxes and sowing some wild flower seeds and then every year we would add more and more wildlife friendly features as time and budget allowed – though to be honest most of our wildlife friendly features were very low-cost or free!



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### What actions have you taken for wildlife in your garden/outdoor space and why?

We have dug two ponds, left some areas to grow wild, provided homes for animals (bird and bat boxes, hedgehog house, insect homes, log piles etc.), planted a range of different species for bees and other insects, planted a hedgerow and generally gardened ‘sympathetically’, with nature in mind, for example companion planting, composting, making our own fertiliser, not using pesticides, etc. We are also happy to share our produce with the local wildlife – if the birds get to the blackcurrants, or the caterpillars get to the cabbages, or the voles get to the strawberries before us, then good luck to them- we should have been quicker!

We have taken these actions because we want to help nature and we feel it is our responsibility to all do our bit to increase biodiversity, but also because seeing and interacting with all the wildlife on our plot brings us great pleasure and helps many of the group members with their mental health.



### What resources or support have you used?

We have obtained information from books, publications and articles, including Yorkshire Wildlife Trust members' magazine. The internet is also useful for information on wildlife gardening, including Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, RHS and RSPB's websites. Chatting to other gardeners and plot holders and visiting local gardens and nature reserves has provided us with inspiration and ideas to try in our own outdoor space. It is not hard to find information on wildlife gardening and increasing biodiversity, as it seems to be a popular subject at the moment.

### What differences have you noticed as a result of your actions?

There is generally more wildlife about; nesting birds, frogspawn/ frogs in the pond, bees on the borage, hoverflies on the teasel, butterflies on the wildflower patch etc. When we sit and have our lunch break or have a cup of tea, we take time to listen and look around us and there is always so much activity.

### How did it make you feel?

Calm, happy, relaxed and satisfied that we have helped nature in a small way. One group member, Ian says "Taking part in gardening at the allotment has lifted my mood and put me in a better mood. It has really helped and lifted me up. It's been like a safety thing. I could get aggressive and agitated, but together with my medication it's lessening that."

### What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife in your garden/ outdoor space?

Comments from the group include:

'When the friendly robin landed on my head or sings to us from a nearby perch!'

'Watching the blue tits come and go when they were feeding their young. They are so busy.'

'Finding all the worms in the soil when we were digging.'

'Seeing the red kites and other birds fly over our heads.'

'I like cuddling the trees!'



### Has receiving a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Wildlife Gardening Award made you consider doing more for wildlife in your garden? If so, what will you do next?

Receiving the wildlife gardening award has certainly made us feel proud of what we have achieved and has spurred us on to do more. We plan to plant even more flowers to attract bees, butterflies and other insects. We will look into planting more scented flowers to attract moths, to benefit bats and other night-time creatures that visit when we are not there. We will also think about planting more 'drought tolerant' plants; planning for the future when we might expect hotter, drier periods and need to conserve water.

