

Wildlife Gardening in Action

CASE STUDY: GROW Scarborough at The Street Community Garden

Describe your garden before you started gardening with wildlife in mind.

Coast and Vale Community Action's (CaVCA) outdoor area at The Street had been a great space, but had fallen away due to the pandemic. The previous group had disbanded, leaving the space overgrown, unmanaged, and full of litter. While some established plants remained, the area lacked structure, biodiversity, and purpose. It was in need of restoration to create a thriving, wildlife-friendly environment.

How did you get started on your wildlife gardening journey?

When we took over in January 2023, we aimed to create a sustainable, multifunctional space that provided healthy food for the community while supporting wildlife. We embraced agro-ecological principles – working with natural processes to enhance biodiversity and resilience. Our approach focused on restoring habitats, improving soil health, and encouraging beneficial species. By integrating food production with conservation efforts, we set out to build a balanced ecosystem that benefits both people and wildlife.



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What actions have you taken in your garden for wildlife, and why?

In our first year, we focused on getting the garden back into use – clearing overgrowth, tidying up, and taking stock of what was already there. We didn't want to rush in and change everything; instead, we spent time observing how wildlife used the space and made small changes to encourage it, like leaving some areas wild and avoiding chemicals.

As we got to know the garden better, we started making bigger improvements. We planted blackthorn, hawthorn, rowan, and dog rose while managing existing plants like yew, buddleia, sea buckthorn, and hazel. We also created our wildlife-friendly workspace – with volunteers building a fantastic three-bay composter, wood chip bins, laying a wood chip floor, adding a dead hedge, and a larger container pond to support biodiversity.

To provide more habitats, we allow the brambles to grow over an area, leave some grass areas wild, and continue to use



Small tortoiseshell butterfly on a dandelion



companion planting instead of pesticides to attract pollinators and predatory insects. We keep digging to a minimum to protect the soil structure, and have boosted our comfrey plants to make natural plant feed. We now have a great mix of flowering plants providing nectar for most of the year.

We have put up bird feeders and nest boxes, improved our water-harvesting, and started mulching more to keep moisture in the soil. One of the biggest surprises was replacing a muddy verge with gravel – within weeks we spotted common lizards making themselves at home! It's been amazing to see how even small changes can make a big difference for wildlife.

What resources or support have you used?

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has been a huge source of support throughout our project, and we've taken a lot of inspiration from its social media and resources. It's been great knowing we can turn to YWT for advice and ideas!

We'd like to thank CaVCA for allowing us to use their outdoor space to support wildlife and our community.

Beyond that, I've found Huw Richards' YouTube channel and Charles Dowding's books really useful, and Nettles and Petals on Instagram shares some great wildlife-friendly gardening tips. Visiting Garden Organic's HQ was also a brilliant experience – I'd recommend it to anyone interested in sustainable gardening.

We're also lucky to have volunteers with years of experience in wildlife gardening, and we regularly learn from them. Scarborough has some fantastic community projects focused on supporting nature, and it's been great to collaborate and share knowledge.



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

The Street Community Garden has become a really welcoming and vibrant space. Despite being in the middle of an urban area, it now feels lush and tranquil, full of colour, buzzing with insect life, and alive with birdsong.

It's been amazing to see how quickly wildlife has responded to the changes we've made. More birds, butterflies, moths, and bees are visiting, and of course the common lizards!

At the same time, our project is proving that it's possible to grow sustainable food for the community while supporting and encouraging biodiversity.

How did it make you feel?

We all feel incredibly proud of what we've created. Some of our volunteers have been with us from the very beginning and remember when this sustainable, multifunctional garden was just a vision. Seeing it come to life – and knowing the impact it's having on both people and wildlife – is hugely rewarding.

Personally, I'm so grateful for the dedication and hard work our volunteers have put in. Their time and effort have not only helped build a thriving community space but have also created a special place where nature can flourish.



What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife in your garden?

One of our volunteers, MacKenzie, had a cinnabar moth land on his hand, which was a pretty special moment. And, of course, there was the collective excitement when we spotted our first common lizard – proof that the changes we'd made were really working!

For me, it has to be the flock of starlings that regularly visited the garden last year. Watching them forage in the long grass, their movements felt almost dinosaur-like – an incredible reminder of the deep connections between nature, past and present.

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?

Oh yes! It's really inspired us to keep building on what we've started. One of our main goals now is to use the garden as an educational tool to help children connect with nature – whether through simple scavenger hunts, drawing activities, or storytelling with Sproutley (our friendly Brussels sprout!).

We're also looking at increasing our use of green manures and improving water harvesting even further. I'd love to introduce some bat boxes to provide new roosting spots, and of course, we want to keep working with YWT to make the garden as wildlife-friendly as possible!



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Find out more:

 GROW Scarborough:
facebook.com/GROW.Scarborough

 CaVCA: cavca.org.uk

Space for people to enjoy the garden



Providing nest sites for solitary bees

