



Wildlife-Friendly Gardening for Farnham



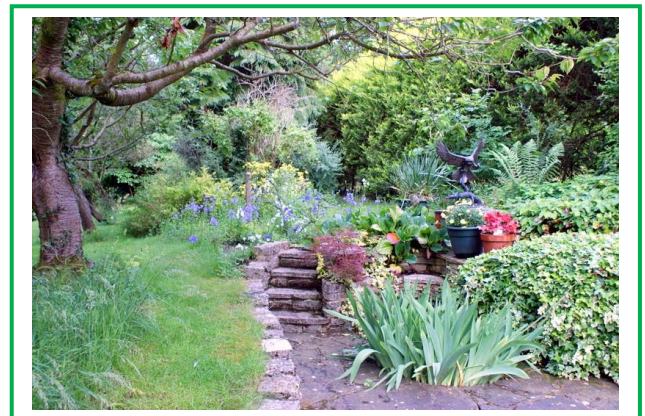
Although Farnham has a naturally rich biodiversity there are serious threats to its plants and animals from a combination of greatly increased human development, pollution, habitat loss and Climate Change. It is important therefore to make every effort possible to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This applies to both public and private sectors and since gardens occupy approximately a third of the town's area they have a vital part to play.



The Town's gardens, large and small, are to an extent already supporting biodiversity, often encouraged by their owners who derive much pleasure not only from the flowers they have planted or fruit they have grown but also from seeing the birds, bees and other animals they attract. This is of significance not only for each garden individually but also for groups of gardens along a street or byway that provide corridors to help shelter and feed wildlife across the harsh urban environment. Much of what is present already is clearly worthy of conservation but there is also much scope for managing gardens in a more wildlife-friendly way.

Here are ten simple guidelines for individuals to improve the management of their gardens to enhance biodiversity

- 1. Plants.** Grow a combination of plants that have scented, single flowers offering easy access to pollinators. A good wildlife garden offers a prolonged seasonal succession of flowers from spring into late autumn. Note which plants are attracting the most insects when visiting a garden centre or other gardens.
- 2. Grow herbs.** Many herbs are aromatic and attract a wide range of insects, especially if allowed to flower. Garden mint, marjoram and rosemary will all attract a broad assortment of pollinators.
- 3. Rely on Natural Pest Control.** Many chemical insecticides and herbicides may give short-term benefits for vegetables or other plants but in the long term are disadvantageous since they indiscriminately kill beneficial animals. For example, slug pellets will kill birds and hedgehogs. Encouraging ladybirds, lacewings, beetles, birds, frogs and hedgehogs will provide safe, sustainable and inexpensive pest control.
- 4. Make Compost.** Rather than buying fertilisers, make your own compost. Well managed compost heaps encourage biodiversity and support earth worms. A garden rich in earthworms is highly productive and diverse. If buying compost, avoid peat based products in favour of those using coir, bracken or wool.
- 5. Leave Some Long Grass.** Lawns will become highly diverse when not treated with herbicides or over-mown. Allowing areas of grass to grown long will increase the diversity of both plants and insects.
- 6. Bare soil.** There are many species such as burrowing bees and ants that depend on the availability of areas of bare soil.



7. Hedges and fences. There is an unfortunate trend for boundaries to be enclosed with impenetrable barriers that are designed to either exclude animals or enclose pets. This is one of the factors contributing to the national decline of species such as hedgehogs. Holes or gaps must be left in fences to allow these animals to move from garden to garden. Hedges are a much better alternative than fences provided native hedging plants such as hawthorn are used as they provide cover, nest sites, food and nectar for birds and other species.

8. Ponds and bog gardens. Creating a pond no matter what size, is one of the best ways of boosting biodiversity in a garden. They support many aquatic species such as frogs, newts and dragonflies, and provide water for birds to drink and bath. Aquatic plants also add seasonal variety to the garden.



9. Habitat and forage provision. There are a host of techniques whereby wildlife can be encouraged within a garden by the provision of feeders, nest-boxes, bee hotels, wood piles, rock piles, hibernacula, green rooves and Hugel Mounds (mounds of logs, branches and leaves which help soil fertility, water retention and soil warming to aid plant growth).

10. Focus on Waste. There is a tendency for piles of pots, trays and plastic accoutrements of all sorts to accumulate in gardens. Whenever possible these should be re-used rather than buying new items. Also biodegradable items are becoming more available. Innovation is possible, for example by use of toilet roll cores as seed pots that allow the plants grown in them to be put straight into the ground

There is one other very useful role that gardeners are well placed to undertake. This is the recording of animal and plant species which is a fundamental component of wildlife-friendly gardening. It is best done using the national iRecord system at <https://www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord> but if you are unsure about doing this, you can contact us via e-mail info@farnhambap.org.uk, or via Facebook at Farnham Biodiversity Partnership <https://www.facebook.com/groups/962689330593044>

Useful references

More detailed information available on the subject of Wildlife- Friendly Gardening can be found at:

- **The Wildlife Gardening Forum website** www.wlqf.org
- **The RSPB site,** <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife>
- **The Surrey Wildlife Trust site,** <https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/act-wildlife/helping-wildlife-home>

Other background reading is:

Jeremy Early 2013. 'My Side of the Fence: The Natural History of a Surrey Garden'

Jennifer Owen 2010. 'Wildlife of a Garden: A thirty Year Study'. Royal Horticultural Society

