



**CORONATION
GARDENS**
For food & nature

Gardening in small spaces



AUTUMN BARLOW



The
Wildlife
Trusts



**INCREDIBLE
EDIBLE C.I.C**

theWI

**garden
organic**

Even small spaces can be **wildlife havens...**

While many people dream of having huge gardens teeming with colour and life, we know that's always not practical or possible. But whether you have a sunny windowsill, a balcony, a tiny backyard or a postage stamp lawn, there are lots of ways to make the most of your space. Read on for handy hints and tips...

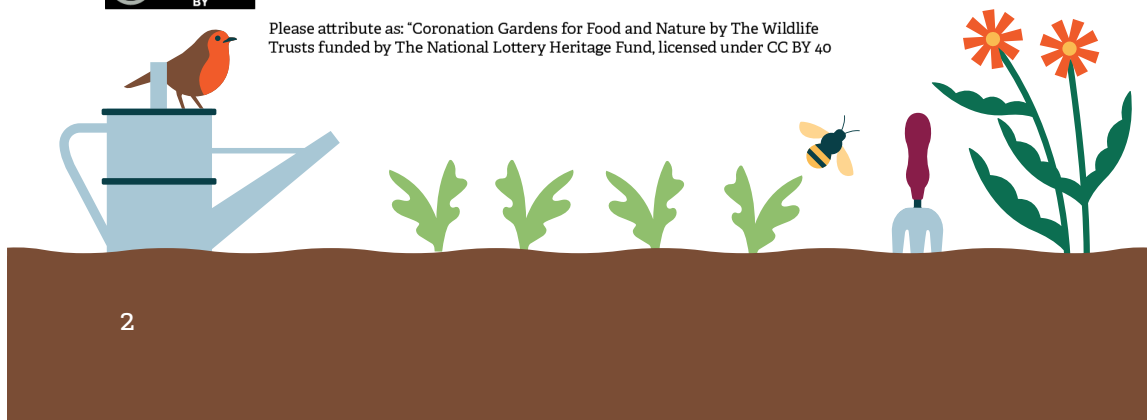
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Why spending time in nature is good for you!

Evidence shows that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits both physical and mental health. People with nature on their doorstep are more active, mentally resilient and have better all-round health.

Spending time in nature has been proven to reduce stress, improve mood and boost concentration. Physically, it lowers blood pressure and can even strengthen the immune system through exposure to beneficial microorganisms.

People's health and well-being is improved by ensuring there are easily accessible wildlife-rich natural spaces where they live and work. This is

particularly important where access to nature is poorest, and pressure on health services is greatest. The condition our neighbourhoods are in directly affects how long people will live, and the quality of their lives. Issues like air quality, the impacts of climate change and how much nature we can enjoy on our doorsteps all impact on our health.

And with just 35% of households with annual incomes below £10,000 are within a 10-minute walk of a publicly accessible natural green space, something has to change. This is why The Wildlife Trusts are working to bring wildlife to more people, and more people to wildlife.



KENNY ELIASON/UNSPLASH

Wonderful window-boxes

Window-boxes fixed to the outside of your flat or house can look beautiful, but you must take care to fix them securely. When they are filled with soil they are very heavy.

But nothing should stop you from filling your windowsills inside with plants – if you're able to throw your windows open wide on warm days, you will still provide any passing insects with a handy pit-stop.

Here are some more tips to get the most of your small space:



Choose plants which like to grow in the same conditions.



Make sure there is good drainage but be careful not to over-water.

NASTURTIUM



CORNFLOWER



POT MARIGOLD



DANDELION



BORAGE

Nibble on a nasturtium?

While you might not be able to grow a crop of potatoes on your windowsill in deep troughs, did you know that many flowers are actually edible, as well as attracting (and deterring) insects, improving pollination, providing free fertiliser and cut flowers!

Garden Organic says:

- The petals are the best bits: stems, stamens and other stringy bits can taste bitter.
- Edible flowers are best picked in the morning. Keep them fresh in a plastic tub in the fridge.
- Don't take all the flowers from your window-box. Leave some for the insects!
- Know what you grow! Always identify any flowers you want to eat – if in doubt, don't.

Take action for insects!

Your window-box could be a vital pit-stop for passing insects. Pollinators prefer flowers that don't have complicated petals or double blooms. While you can't eat poached-egg flowers, despite the name, they make a cheerful display in a container and insects love them. You could also try a cascade of ivy, container varieties of fuchsias, low-growing herbs such as marjoram and thyme, and don't forget about winter and early spring –

winter-flowering crocus look great in window-boxes and on windowsills.



“

I love creepy crawlies (invertebrates). They do so much for humans. I call the ones in my garden my little helpers. The number of fluffy bees and loud hoverflies that pollinate our tomatoes, peas and beans has gone down by 18% since 1970. The graceful dragonflies, shiny beetles and stripy wasps that keep the numbers of flies and caterpillars under control have reduced by 34%. They need some big helpers (us humans!) to give them a small space. A window-box can make a big difference to our little helpers.”

Sara Booth-Card, Campaigner at The Wildlife Trusts.

Brilliant balconies

5.4 million people in the UK live in flats or apartments, many with balconies. These can grow an incredible range of things that will provide food for you and for wildlife.

Practical considerations

- ✓ Health and safety! Containers full of soil can be very heavy. Don't overload your balcony.
- ✓ High winds can damage your plants and blow your containers and garden furniture away. Make sure everything is properly fixed. Consider making or buying simple screens to reduce wind.
- ✓ Balconies often don't get enough rain, so make sure you're able to reach everything that'll need watering.



Shady characters

If you have a balcony that's only partly in sun, you're in luck! Salad vegetables prefer this. Too much sun makes lettuces run quickly to seed, and can dry out your containers. Sow at intervals throughout the year to have fresh salads from spring to late autumn. But do allow a few of them to flower, so insects can benefit from a healthy snack too.

TRY THESE

There are lots of delicious recipes which incorporate salad ingredients. Try out these recipes, courtesy of the WI:

- [Sourdough summer starter](#)
- [Broad bean bruschetta](#)
- [Courgette, feta and dill fritters](#)
- [Green bean risotto](#)
- [Roasted garlic and chive dip](#)



What to watch

While you may find fewer insects the higher you go, most balconies will be able to attract a range of insects, beetles, butterflies, moths and bees. You just need to create the right conditions to tempt them to visit!



All wildlife needs a water source, so help your passing pollinators by putting out a shallow bowl, and keep it clean and topped up, ideally with rainwater if you can collect that. Pop some pebbles in the water so that insects have somewhere to land.



Don't forget the birds! They will appreciate water, too. However, if you are going to feed birds on your balcony, consider putting anti-collision stickers on your windows so they don't get confused by their reflections. Also avoid having windchimes or glittery decorations that move and sway in the wind. These can scare birds off.



Between May and October, you may also see bats, especially around sunset. We have 17 species of bat in the UK and they feast on insects – so if you can make your balcony insect-friendly, you might also attract bats! They fly in darting, erratic movements as they chase down their prey. Set up a chair, wrap yourself in a blanket, and enjoy the show.



Get growing



ANNUAL














PERENNIAL



















EVERGREEN



POLLINATOR FRIENDLY

NAME	GROWING		NOTES
HERBS	Many herbs come from the Mediterranean region and are tolerant of drought, but if you're growing them in containers, you will need to water them regularly in hot weather. And pollinators love them!		
Dill	Sow outdoors from mid-spring, harvest leaves within 8 weeks	 	
Chives	Sow outdoors from mid-spring. Harvest throughout summer	 	
Thyme	Tricky to grow from seed. Buy a young plant or take cuttings in late spring or early summer. Harvest leaves all year round for cooking	  	Can create a lawn for light use
Rosemary			
Lavender			
Sage			
EDIBLE FLOWERS	Add these to salads or pasta dishes – but leave enough for the insects too!		
Nasturtium	Sow outside March to May. Edible flowers all summer	 	Large and small white butterflies eat the leaves, luring them away from your other veg
Pot marigold (Calendula)			
Cornflower			
Borage			The leaves are hairy and can cause dermatitis for people with sensitive skin – wear gloves
VEGETABLES AND SALADS	Only grow veg that you know you like to eat – but we think you're going to love these!		
Peas	Sow in batches outside between March and the end of June		You can also start them earlier inside
Runner beans	Sow outside in May and June		

NAME	GROWING		NOTES
Broad beans	Sow outside between March and April		You can also start them earlier inside
Courgette	Sow inside then plant out in early summer		You only need one plant, so it's often better just to buy one young plant
Garlic	Plant the cloves in autumn for a crop next year		Don't use cooking garlic from the supermarket as it might not be suitable for British weather
Lettuce	Sow outdoors from mid-spring, harvest leaves within 8 weeks		Sow every two weeks for salads all summer
Tomatoes	Sow outdoors from mid-spring. Harvest throughout summer	 	"Bush" tomatoes grow in pots or hanging baskets. "Cordon" tomatoes will grow up against a cane
FOOD FOR WILDLIFE	You might not be able to eat these, but your local wildlife will soon make a meal of them!		
Poached egg flower	Sow outside March to June. Flowers June to September	 	
English or common Ivy	Propagate as semi-ripe cuttings in summer. Berries for wildlife between November and January	  	
Winter flowering crocus (colchicum)	Plant bulbs May to June. Flowers September onwards	 	Looks like crocus but is a different species
Clover	Sow seeds in spring or early autumn	 	Can create a lawn for light use
Yarrow	Divide in spring, or sow seeds outside in spring	 	

DON'T FORGET ABOUT FRUIT



Look for dwarf varieties that will work well in a small space or large pot, or ones that can be trained against a wall.

■ Apple, pear, raspberry, blueberry, cherry and plum.

Yippee for yards

Small spaces are manageable and are often more protected from frost and high winds. If you're renting, then use containers that are easily transferred to a new place.

Think vertically! Make the most of stone or brick walls, growing climbers and encouraging cascades of pollinator-friendly flowers from tubs.



Collect rainwater. Every downspout should go to a water butt, and keep your guttering clear. Use saucers under pots to catch excess water.



Herbs that originate from the Mediterranean are well adapted to lower rainfalls. Growing a range from rosemary and lavender to sage and thyme, and you'll liven up your cooking and make the local insects very happy too.



TOP TIP

"Garden for drought by maximising the water holding capacity of your soil. Cover it with homemade, organic compost, as a mulch – or even something as simple as grass cuttings - just after watering. Keep digging to a minimum, and [sow green manures](#) in any soil standing bare after harvests. Consider perennial plants, which use water more effectively than annuals. And let clover and yarrow grow in your lawn as they are much less susceptible to drought, and attract insects," says Garden Organic's head gardener Emma O'Neill.

Potty about peat

Container gardens look amazing when there's a mass of different tubs and pots, bursting with an array of vegetables, salads, fruit and flowers.

However – take care that you're filling those containers with peat-free compost! It's readily available in all good garden centres, but do double-check the labels before you buy.

Peat can be hidden, too, in all sorts of places. Most mushrooms and bagged salads in supermarkets have been grown in peat, and when you buy bedding plants or house plants, these are often rooted in peat.



But why is this such a problem?

Well, peat is an incredible resource. Peatlands in the UK store carbon, stopping it releasing into the atmosphere and contributing to climate change. They also help to reduce flooding from upland areas to towns, they help to filter water, and they are amazing habitats for rare and endangered species.

The problem is, peat forms slowly. Unbelievably slowly. It grows at a rate of 1mm a year – it takes 1,000 years to form just one metre of peat. We can't keep digging it up and putting it into bags!

There are loads of great alternatives to peat – including making your own compost – so check the labels and make sure you go peat-free.



Glorious gardens

Perfect ponds

All wildlife needs water – and you can help, no matter how big or small your patch is. You can attract damselfly and dragonflies, frogs, newts, birds, hedgehogs and bats – the best natural garden pest controllers.

Think creatively! You can use a washing-up bowl, a large plant pot, an old sink, or many other watertight containers, but do make sure that creatures can get in and out. This means either sinking it into the soil or adding ramps for access. If you have a sunken pond, use a pile of logs or stones in the water so that creatures can land.



Make sure the pond gets some sunlight but not full sun all day. Cover the base in a layer of gravel and rocks, and let it fill up with rainwater.

You'll only need two or three plants – perhaps one tall plant that sticks up, like flowering rush, and a plant that stays submerged like hornwort or spiked water milfoil.



Say hello to hedgehogs!

Hedgehogs roam far and wide at night. You can help them by talking with your neighbours and cutting a 13cm square hole in your fence, or digging a channel, to connect your gardens.

A hedgehog's diet is varied, so avoid pesticides and slug pellets. Grow a lot of different plants and keep some patches of grass a little longer to encourage plenty of invertebrates for your spiny friends to snack on. A wood pile will draw in earwigs, centipedes and woodlice.

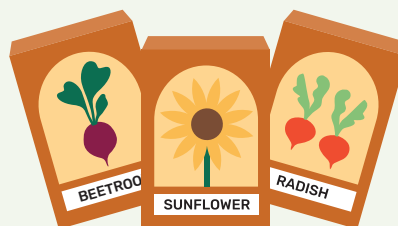
Snacks from the sky

You can increase the size of your garden by thinking upwards, and making use of walls, fences and trellis, and even roofs. Fruit trees and bushes come in all sorts of varieties, and dwarf types will grow in small spaces, in pots, and against cordons. Try apples, pears, blueberries, raspberries, quinces, cherries, plums and even figs and peaches. Check if you need to buy more than one bush or tree for pollination.



TOP TIP

Seed swaps help people to share their seeds, but also support new growers and gardeners by making locally adapted seeds available to them through a donation system, boosting their chances of gardening success! Find out more about Incredible Edible and discover your local group – or how to start one – [here](#).



Where to find more information

Garden Organic

Through campaigning, advice, community work, conservation and research, sustainable gardening charity [Garden Organic](#) helps gardeners cultivate a healthier, more biodiverse and sustainable world. Follow @gardenorganicuk.

Incredible Edible

[Incredible Edible's](#) vision is to create kind, confident and connected communities through the power of food. If you eat, you're in.

The WI

[The National Federation of Women's Institutes](#) work to empower women to make positive contributions to their communities, campaign on a range of things that are important to them, support each other and find fun and friendship.



The Wildlife Trusts

[Our purpose](#) is to bring wildlife back, to empower people to take meaningful action for nature, and to create an inclusive society where nature matters.

Our vision is of a thriving natural world, with our wildlife and natural habitats playing a valued role in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies, and everyone inspired to get involved in nature's recovery.



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About Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature



Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature is an ambitious partnership between the WI, Garden Organic, Incredible Edible and the Wildlife Trusts. Inspired by His Majesty The King, we are supporting communities to grow food in a wildlife-friendly way. With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the partnership will encourage more people to take collective local action that has a positive impact on nature, health and wellbeing.

Through the delivery of Coronation Gardens we would like to see communities inspired to take local action that collectively has a positive impact – increasing nature in and around the places we live, and improving the health and wellbeing of the UK population.

This has been made possible by
funding from The National Lottery
Heritage Fund





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GARDENS**
For food & nature

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature is a partnership between Garden Organic, Incredible Edible, The WI and The Wildlife Trusts. We've come together to encourage everyone to grow food in a wildlife-friendly way.

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