

# Is your garden HEDGEHOG HAPPY?



## Hedgehogs at risk

The UK-wide decline of hedgehogs has been well documented by The People's Trust for Endangered Species and The British Hedgehog Preservation Society.






It is thought the numbers of hedgehogs have reduced by up to a third in urban areas and over half in rural areas since the year 2000. Research carried out by the Wildlife Trusts revealed that 40% of children have never seen a hedgehog in the wild and further research confirmed that fewer people are reporting hedgehogs in areas where they were once common.

The decline of hedgehog populations is likely the result of a range of factors, not least the loss of suitable places for them to nest and feed. This means our gardens are becoming increasingly important refuges for hedgehogs. Read on...

[www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

## Feeding our prickly friends

There are a few ways in which we can help to nourish our prickly friends between February and March, when they wake from hibernation and start their search for food.

-  Try leaving out food between February and October, such as minced meat, fresh liver, tinned dog food (not fish-based), crushed dog or cat biscuits and even scrambled eggs to encourage visitors.
-  Specialist hedgehog food can be bought from wildlife food suppliers such as Ark Wildlife ([www.arkwildlife.co.uk](http://www.arkwildlife.co.uk)).
-  Hedgehogs should never be given cows' milk - it may give them diarrhoea. It's best to give them fresh water each night in a shallow bowl.
-  Replace food and water daily.
-  Dispose of food if not eaten.



# HEDGEHOG DETECTIVES

Your regular garden friend may not be that regular...as many as 10 different hedgehogs may actually be visiting you over a day or two!

It's important that you record your sightings in order that populations can be surveyed and monitored for their own protection and conservation - see panel below.

Look for droppings. They are dark and full of shiny bugs and seeds.

Set up a night camera.

Check for footprints. Place an old baking tray on the ground, and fill with damp sand. Try placing a small dish of food in the centre, and check for prints the next morning!

Build a hedgehog house! Use a small brick structure and cover it with leaves in a quiet, sheltered corner of your garden.

If you find an injured hedgehog and need advice, please contact:

Prickles Hedgehog Rescue

07469 177 090  
[www.suffolkprickles.org](http://www.suffolkprickles.org)

Record your sightings of hedgehogs at [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org) on their map.



# HOW TO MAKE YOUR GARDEN **HEDGEHOG HAPPY!**

## Leave areas wild

Create a nest site by leaving areas of the garden unkept and wild, with piles of logs, leaf litter and nectar-rich flowers.

These will also attract a food source in providing a home for the invertebrates that hedgehogs like to eat.



## Hedgehog highways

Hedgehogs can travel a mile (1.6km) or so every single night, so make your garden boundary easy for them to cross. Try cutting small holes (13cm) in fences or digging a tunnel to create 'hedgehog highways' which will allow local hogs to move in and out of your garden.



## Lawnmowers

Lift the layers of undergrowth and long grass with a blunt pole to check for sleeping hogs before using electric strimmers and mowers - these could result in fatalities to our sleeping friends.



## Bonfires

Build your bonfire as close to the time of lighting as possible, so as not to attract unwanted visitors. Ensure you check for sleepy hogs before lighting it.



## Slug pellets

Slug pellets and pesticides can poison hedgehogs and should be avoided. If you must use pellets, place them under a slate which is inaccessible to hedgehogs.



## Compost heaps

Check compost heaps for hogs before forking it over.

## Drain covers and holes

Ensure drain covers are in good condition and any holes are well covered. Should a hedgehog fall down one, they could suffer a slow and agonising death.

## Water sources

Deep water is a hazard for hedgehogs. Cover swimming pools when not in use, and ensure your pond has a gentle slope for them to climb out of should they fall in. Empty out buckets and water troughs in the areas you want to make hedgehog-friendly.



## Netting

Remove netting from plants and trees where possible (try mesh instead!) and store away football goals and sports nets when not in use. This will prevent hedgehogs getting tangled up and injured.

## Litter

Keep your garden free from litter. Hedgehogs can get their head stuck in tins, plastic rings or bags, so dispose of your rubbish safely!

