

WILDER GARDENS PROJECTS 2024

WILDER GARDENS “HINTS AND TIPS” ENTERED IN THE VILLAGE’S NEWSLETTER EVERY MONTH THROUGH 2024.

Announcing the plan in December 2023.

Wilder Gardens is a sub-group of the Wilder Wenhaston project. Following our Garden Survey in early 2023, we arranged the ‘Open Wilder Gardens’ event on June 4th 2023; many reported this as an enjoyable and educational experience, nice teas and cake too!

In 2024, we want to encourage sharing ideas via Wenhaston Warbler to increase our potential, as a village, to attract and protect local wildlife in our gardens.

Our idea is to publish seasonal monthly “Wilder Garden tips and jobs”, gathered from seasoned experts in the village, including you!

We are grateful to Sue and Tony Gow, Alan Miller, Sue and Barry Norrington for their contributions to kick-start 2024. We invite you to send YOUR ideas by email to wilderwenhaston@gmail.com and we will include them in subsequent editions.

JANUARY

This year encourage your garden to grow wilder, make it a mini nature reserve.

Clean bird baths and feeders regularly throughout the year.

Create your garden planting plan to include more pollinators.

Plan where a pond for wildlife (not fish) might go, big, small or tiny.

Talk to your neighbours about creating corridors for wildlife, like gaps for hedgehogs and sharing plant seeds for bees and other insects.

Jobs for your winter wildlife garden:

Put something that floats in your pond (football or tennis ball) to allow oxygen to reach the water if it freezes over. If using a metal container, like a sink or basin, this can still freeze even if below ground.

Keep bird feeders topped up and clean.

Remember: Hedgehogs hibernate in leafy or bonfire-ready piles; queen bees beneath the soil protected by such piles. Check before you tidy up too much.

Tell us YOUR ideas for tips and jobs to be shared here, email wilderwenhaston@gmail.com

FEBRUARY

Have winter gales taken a toll on your fences?

Consider replacing them with a native hedge such as Hawthorn, Berberis, Blackthorn and Field Maple, planted with Dog Rose between. This provides good natural nesting habitat and food for many species. Perhaps this could be a joint project with your neighbour?

More information on hedge and tree planting at The Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

If you are replacing fence panels, try to include a gap for hedgehogs to travel through.

It's a good time for cutting down grasses and hollow stemmed plants – but rather than discarding them, leave them in a pile somewhere where they will protect any hibernating insects.

Spring cleaning starts outdoors by ensuring your bird nest boxes are cleaned out ready for this year's new broods. If you've got space, you could put up additional nest boxes.

Try putting out ready nesting material such as raw wool or hair (human or dog) for birds to collect and use.

As well as feeding birds, leave them fresh water, unfreeze if necessary.

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MARCH

Plant now for summer insects and winter bird food

Pulmoneria, an excellent early flower for bees

As the soil warms up, plant shrubs and trees for wildlife for example butterflies LOVE Budleia and Lavender. Later in the year birds will descend on winter berries like cotoneaster, Rowan, Crab Apple – all these are good growers in our soil.

APRIL

Garden insects are re-appearing, some having hibernated over winter, others hatching or emerging from pupa. It's a great month for spotting insects as a feeding frenzy begins ready for the next reproductive cycle. We can help them by providing pollen-rich plants, some were recommended in last month's Wildlife Garden page. Wild flower seeds can be scattered now on impoverished soil, they will provide a rich source of pollen and look beautiful right through the summer.

Bug hotels in our gardens are important and interesting structures, providing places for insects to hide away in. They can be easily built from old planks of wood or unused pallets then filled with hollow sticks, stones, pots, hay or dry twigs – anything that fills gaps between the basic structure. Here are three examples from three Wenhaston wildlife gardens.



These are two useful websites giving information to help build your own bug hotel.

<https://www.redtedart.com/simple-bug-hotel-for-kids/>

<https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2019/07/Build-a-bug-hotel.pdf>

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Ann Follows and Judy Miller

MAY

Why not make this a “NO MOW MAY” and even consider extending this beyond May, by a month or longer? Leaving a certain amount of your lawn/grass long encourages an enormous amount of wildlife and if you let the weeds (also known as Wildflowers) get going they will stay around!

A suggestion is to grow bulbs in any meadow-type area and not dead head as you might with bulbs in the border or tubs; instead let them seed as well as producing their bulblets.

Try planting in your verges and leave some longer grass but do cut or mow a metre nearest the road for visibility.

Look out for the plant sale up in the churchyard this month. This and other local plant stalls can help you find reasonably priced native plants look especially for good pollinators; or try a plant swap with your friends and neighbours.

If you have a pond keep watching for signs of frogs, toads, newts, dragonflies and other wildlife that use it.

Thinking ahead:

Plant winter bird food plants, for example teasel and sunflowers.

You can order bulbs now to be delivered later in the year.

Try planting wallflower seeds in May to produce plants for your borders later in the year, they will flower earlyish the following spring to be a source of nectar.

Thanks for additional contributions this month from Jo Small.

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Ann Follows and Judy Miller

JUNE

Insects and worms are essential for our gardens, the wider ecosystem and for life on earth!

Ladybirds, lacewings, and hoverflies are natural predators of aphids, mites, and mealy bugs. Fruiting plants are helped by pollinators – e.g. bees, sawflies, wasps and beetles. Spiders, beetles, aphids, worms, are prey for garden birds and hedgehogs. Worms aerate the soil. Ground beetles love eating slugs and snails, while parasitic wasps will kill caterpillars, ants, and aphids.

Are you growing herbs in pots or your garden? Many herbs attract insect pollinators: rosemary, sage, fennel, chives, and wild thyme amongst others and so useful in recipes! Lacewings particularly like parsley.

If mowing long grass after 'No Mow May' be mindful of any wildlife that has set up home in the longer grass. Or perhaps leave it long for longer?

Ponds or small water sources provide hydration and a bathing spot for wildlife as summer starts hotting up. Keep your eyes peeled: if lucky – your tadpoles become froglets and toads this month! Look out for damselflies and dragonflies as they pair up and mate, laying their eggs on pond plants and grass. You may see larvae emerging as adults, leaving their exuviae (the case they emerge from) stuck to the plant they were laid on. Fascinating to look at.

Wildlife ponds can need routine maintenance to naturally combat blanket and duckweed either by manually skimming or adding barley straw extract. A solar-powered aerator can be simple and cost effective remedy.

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Ann Follows and Judy Miller

JULY

Summer nights and garden visitors:

Moths

You can begin to encourage moths by growing scented plants, this helps moths find their food, nectar, even when it's dark.

Letting your grass grow longer, leaving thistles and knapweeds to flower is another easy way to provide moth food. You can also grow plants for moth caterpillars to feed on. From RSPB website, these are plants for summer and autumn:

For night-flying moths in summer:

Tobacco Plant, Evening Primrose, Native Honeysuckle, Hemp-agrimony, Sweet Rocket, and Jasmine

For night-flying moths in autumn:

Ivy, Michaelmas Daisy and ice Plant.

Wenhaston Commons Group is offering an outdoors Moth trap and ID event on **August 10th** – save the date and look for details to be advertised in the Warbler.

Bats

The UK has 18 native species of bats with 13 recorded in Suffolk. Records for Wenhaston identify Barbastelle, Serotine, Daubentons, Natterers, Noctule, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle and brown long eared bats. Harsh or permanent lighting at night confuses them and makes it hard for them to feed.

Hedgehogs

are particularly active during July, foraging at night to feed themselves and their young. Put food out along with a bowl of water. Hedgehogs are particularly helpful in wet weather as they eat slugs!

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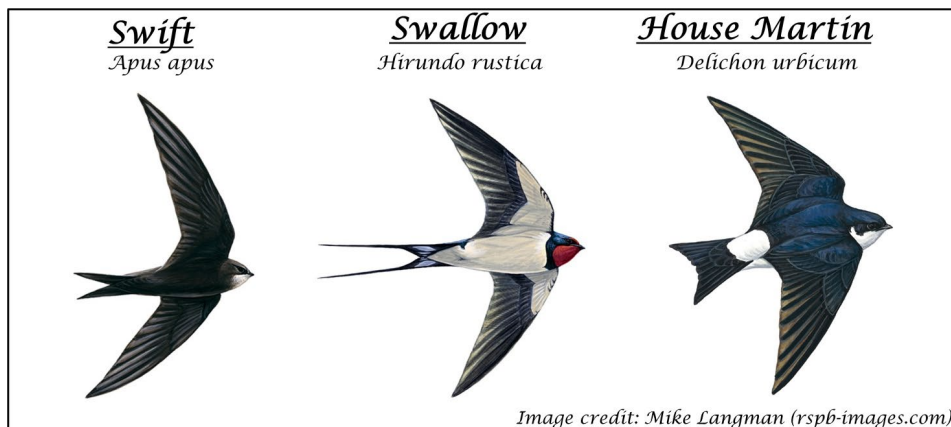
Ann Follows and Judy Miller

AUGUST

Swifts, Swallows and Martins

Swifts, swallows, house and sand martins all start migrate to Southern Africa this month. Swift screaming parties have swooped through our village, feeding low and high on insects which in turn are feeding from our garden plants and ponds.

How to tell the difference



Sand martins nest on Blackheath, but unlike house martins, sand martin's have brown backs.

The Swift Group record numbers of swifts and their nest sites seen in the village, annually. Have you noticed any swift, swallows or house martins nesting at your house.

What to do in your garden over winter to prepare for their return in April/May 2025.

Create a pond or wet area with a bog garden, providing a muddy area for swallows and house martins to swoop down to collect mud for building nests. Grow insect-friendly plants.

Identify areas below roof line suitable to fix swift nest boxes. House martins build mud nests in the eaves but will use artificial nest boxes, while swallows nest in outbuildings and need clear points of entry.

Thanks to Kate Archibald for this topic and some of the above information.

Share YOUR ideas for tips and jobs, email wilderwenhaston@gmail.com

Ann Follows and Judy Miller

SEPTEMBER

GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES

It's been a mixed year for butterflies. Started well but numbers took a dive after May, so here are a few hints on giving them a helping hand.

Butterflies feed on nectar without being too fussy about which plants they visit, so attracting butterflies to your garden can be as simple as just growing lots of their favourite flowers in sunny, sheltered spots and holding fire on insecticides.

In spring and early summer, wildflowers such as bluebell, red campion, cornflower, primrose, birds-foot trefoil and clover provide nectar together with the blossom of fruit trees, currant and bramble.

In mid and late summer, lavender, perennial wallflowers and flowers of herbs like thyme and marjoram attract butterflies and other insects, especially bees.

In the autumn, when most other nectar providers have shut down, Ivy flowers are an important food source.

Although caterpillars are more particular about their food, leaving areas of long grass should bring in egg-laying female Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Ringlet butterflies. Stinging nettles are the main food crop for caterpillars of Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, and Peacock butterflies. Painted Lady caterpillars fatten up on thistles and Holly Blues on holly and ivy.

Our thanks to Linda Hammond for writing this month's article. Linda is part of a team who complete an annual butterfly survey in the village.

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Ann Follows and Judy Miller

OCTOBER

Creating a log or leaf pile in one corner of your garden can provide shelter where wildlife; everything from hedgehogs to spiders, solitary wasps and bees, can hibernate and be a year-round home for all kinds of bugs. They can be a food source for others in the garden.

Allowing perennials and annual plants to die back naturally and resist cutting them down. They will remain home for insects through the winter especially ladybirds who are valuable aphid eaters for next year.

Later, cut hollow stem perennials and stack under a hedge or tree for insect/mammal overwintering protection

Next year the Wilder Wenhaston Wilder Garden Group are planning to hold another Wilder Open Gardens event with a Wilder Garden Question Time to follow, with a panel to answer your questions. Look out for further details in the New Year.

Share YOUR ideas for tips and jobs, email wilderwenhaston@gmail.com

Judy Miller and Ann Follows

NOVEMBER

In November there's no need to be too tidy in the garden. Allow leaves to stay on beds and borders even if cleared off your grass. As they rot down worms take the product into the soil, improving fertility for next year. Alternately, bag up your leaves or create a leaf-mould compost heap. Running a mower over raked-up leaves speeds up breakdown. Leaving fallen leaves or hollow-stemmed plants in piles provides over-wintering protection for insects and small mammals.

In October, an outreach activity linked to the second Halesworth Climate Conference, will have taken with older pupils from Wenhaston Primary School and staff facilitated by volunteers from St Peter's Church, Wilder Wenhaston's Wilder Gardens group, Blyth Woods and Wenhaston Commons Group. During the session, the children will visit conservation projects in the village and help construct a 'Bug Hotel' and 'Hedgehog House' in the churchyard.

In May/June 2025 (date to be confirmed), we are planning our second Wilder Open Gardens event, More information in spring 2025.

To share YOUR ideas for tips and jobs or request hedgehog or bug hotel plans, email wilderwenhaston@gmail.com

Ann Follows and Judy Miller

DECEMBER

This is our final page of Wilder Gardens and ponds 'hints and tips'. We hope you have enjoyed reading each month's suggestions. In summer 2025, we are planning a second wilder gardens open day, together with a garden question time panel event.

Now it is deep winter, keep your garden untidy in places, with leaf piles and litter gathered by your hedges or fences and perennials cut half way – these all provide winter hibernation for wildlife like insects and mammals and reptiles or invertebrates that may be dormant.

Hedgehogs may be under leaf piles, shrubs or compost heaps. For this reason, bonfires are a danger.

If you have a holly tree, take some branches with berries for decoration, but leave some berries for the birds. Try grafting mistletoe – another bird treat.

Christmas present ideas: give membership to organisations that support wildlife examples are: Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, World Land Trust or the Woodland Trust. Bird nest boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog houses, wild flower seed packets for planting in spring, books about how to wild a garden (example below), all make nice gifts for children or adults.

Ann Follows and Judy Miller



ESTABLISHING A WILDFLOWER SEEDBANK

Invest in Wenhaston's wildlife join a new wildflower seedbank and swap scheme.

Grow new wildflower plants or expand your current wildflower garden species. Growing wildflowers encourages insects which in turn, encourages endangered species of insect-eating birds: swifts, swallows, house and sand martins.

We encourage everyone to collect wild flower seed from their garden later this summer. From these seeds, we want to enable others to introduce new wildflowers for growth next year by facilitating a swap and sales scheme from locally donated wildflower seeds.

If you already grow wildflowers, when they go to seed, collecting can be as simple as using a paper bag and shaking plant seed into it (using a separate bag for each seed species).

Ten wildflower species we'd like to collect for the bank in 2024 are: Oxeye daisy, foxglove, yellow rattle, ragged robin, marsh marigold, purple loosestrife, wild carrot, cowslips, red clover, campion. Any others you grow will be gratefully accepted.

We will issue you with small dedicated seedbank envelopes, or if you collect in your own bag or envelopes, then we will divide into our small envelopes and store in the seed bank ready to swap or sell, to raise funds for costs at various village events.

For more information, request for seed envelopes and for collection or donation please contact either Judy Miller 478882 or Ann Follows 478324



