



Cunning Containers

Hanging baskets, planters and window boxes for the wildlife garden



Gloucestershire

Hanging baskets, herb holders, mini meadows, even a pond in a pot – can you contain your joy? Pots and containers are one way of introducing wildlife features into more formal areas of the garden like the patio or outside the back door.

For smaller gardens, containers are perfect for a small space. Herbs in particular make good container plants and attract lots of wildlife – as well as being useful in the kitchen.

There are also many ingenious planting schemes that can be tried. Sow your own mini-wildflower meadow in a window box, or line a pot with plastic to make a potted pond or bog garden. Even use objects such as old chimney pots, sinks, kettles, and holey boots as containers.

Planting ideas are given below for:

- A wildlife hanging basket
- Butterfly/nectar tubs and baskets
- Cornfield meadow pots
- Pond in a pot
- Wetland bog pot
- Woodland pot for a shady position
- Heathland pot
- Chalk downland pot

Quirky containers

Old watering cans, kettles or teapots, holey boots, metal pails and buckets, bird or other pet's cage, paint tins, catering tins, old pans and colanders, – the sky's the limit!



How to do it ... tubs and troughs for wildlife

Nectar-rich plants for butterflies and other insects

Early: aubretia, alyssum, snowdrops, species crocuses, English bluebells

Late: red valerian, lavender, michaelmas daisies, yarrow

Long lasting and nectar rich: heliotrope, marigolds, scabious, knapweeds, agastache, buddleia

For bees and others: rosemary, sage, thyme, alyssum, comfrey, clover, borage, catmint, teasel

Larval foodplants: stinging nettle, ivy, bird's-foot-trefoil, nasturtiums, garlic mustard, lady's smock (cuckoo flower)

Cover for hibernation: ivy

1. Drainage holes – if necessary, drill 5-10mm diameter drainage holes into the bottom about 15cm apart.
2. Cover with crocks.
3. Half fill with peat-free compost.
4. Start planting: continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.



Remember native species are best, but nectar-rich plants can be a good food source.

How to do it ...wildlife hanging baskets

1. Rest the basket on a bucket or large pot for stability .
2. Line with an old woolly jumper (not a moss liner) cut to size or choose a solid basket.
3. Start planting using peat-free compost. Put in a tall, central plant (such as scabious, lavender, sage) smaller ones around it and trailing plants through the sides.
4. Continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer .

Cool blues:

aubrieta, lobelia, wild pansy, nepeta

Hot reds:

marigolds, fuchsia

Neutral whites :

sweet alyssum, erigeron, ox-eye daisy

Tall central plant:

knapweed, scabious, lavender, snapdragon, pot marigold

Herb smellies/eatables:

verbena, patio tomatoes, chives, thyme, rosemary, parsley, sage, patio strawberry, dwarf lavender

Trailers:

ivy, nasturtium, honeysuckle, sweet pea, lobelia 'Pendula'

photos - A. Williams

Cornfield meadow pots

Cool blues: Cornflower, wild pansy
Hot reds: Poppy, corncockle, pheasant's eye
Soft yellows: Corn marigold, corn buttercup

1. Drainage holes – if necessary, drill 5-10mm diameter holes into the bottom about 15cm apart.
2. Cover with crocks.
3. Half fill with peat-free compost.
4. Start planting! Continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.
6. Sow each year.

Boggy wetland pot

Cool blues: Water forget-me-not, brooklime, skullcap
Hot reds: Purple loosestrife, marsh woundwort, ragged robin, flowering rush
Neutral whites, soft yellows and greens: Gypsywort, marsh cinquefoil, cuckooflower, soft rush, meadowsweet, marsh marigold

1. Drainage holes – if necessary, drill 5-10mm diameter holes into the bottom about 15cm apart.
2. Cover with crocks, liner or plastic bags to retard drainage.
3. Half fill with peat-free compost.
4. Start planting! Continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.

Pond in a pot

Submerged oxygenators: Hornwort, spiked water milfoil
Submerged floaters: Potamogetons, water starwort, frogbit
Emergent plants (on a shelf): Water forget-me-not, gypsywort, flowering rush, arrowhead, watercress

1. Find a suitable leak-free container such as an old sink with the plug hole plugged.
2. Put a 2-4cm thick layer of peat-free compost in the bottom and cover with gravel to hold it down.
3. Run water in very gently, preferably over plastic to avoid stirring the substrate. Use rain water if possible. Let tap water stand for a few days.
4. Plant up after a few days when water has cleared.
5. Maintain water levels.

'Woodland' pot suitable for a shady or semi-shaded position

Cool blues: Wood forget-me-not, bluebell, bugle, lungwort
Red hots: Hedge woundwort, red campion, foxglove, herb Robert, lungwort
Neutral whites, yellows & greens: Primrose, lesser celandine, yellow archangel, ivy, wood avens, ferns, hellebores, wood sage, lords and ladies, wood spurge

1. Drainage holes – if necessary, drill 5-10mm diameter drainage holes into the bottom about 15cm apart.
2. Cover with crocks.
3. Half fill with peat-free (especially use a leaf mould based) compost.
4. Start planting! Continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.

Chalk grassland pot

Low growing: Common thyme, rock-rose
Flowers: Salad burnet, harebell, eyebright, self-heal hairy violet, quaking grass, restharrow, meadow clary, cowslip, kidney vetch, horsehoe vetch, small scabious.

1. Drainage holes – if necessary, drill 5-10mm diameter holes into the bottom about 15cm apart.
2. Cover with crocks.
3. Mixed crushed chalk with soil and half fill with peat-free compost.
4. Start planting! Continue building up plants and compost until about 5cm from the top.
5. Water well and enjoy! Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.



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Living landscape

Our gardens represent a vast living landscape; and with an estimated 16 million gardens in the UK, the way they are managed can make a big difference to wildlife. Across gardens and beyond, The Wildlife Trusts' vision to create a Living Landscape involves enlarging, improving and joining-up areas of wildlife-rich land in all parts of the UK. There are now over 100 inspirational Living Landscape schemes around the UK, rich in opportunities for sustainability, learning, better health and wellbeing. What is good for wildlife is good for people too.

For more information go to

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