

HOMES FOR MAMMALS

SEVERAL TYPES OF MAMMAL can be found in the gardens of the UK, and what species you can attract will depend on where you live, the surrounding landscape and available habitats. Frequent visitors include bats, hedgehogs and grey squirrels.



BATS

- There are 17 species of bat in the UK. The most abundant of these, and the most likely to use bat boxes, is the common pipistrelle. It is the UK's smallest bat, and weighs the same as just 10 paperclips. The pipistrelle appears larger when it is in flight and moves very erratically through the air.
- Some bats are becoming increasingly rare in the UK, partly due to the loss of roost sites and a decline in insect-rich habitats.
- If you find a sick or injured bat, you should not approach or handle the animal, but seek advice from the Bat Conservation Trust on 0845 130 0228 or visit www.bats.org.uk



Pipistrelle bat

HOMES FOR BATS

- ★ You can help these fascinating mammals by managing your garden to provide an abundance of insect food and by providing new roosting sites for them.
- ★ Erecting bat boxes can help, by providing alternative roosting sites for these creatures.



★ denotes priority action

For more ideas please visit:

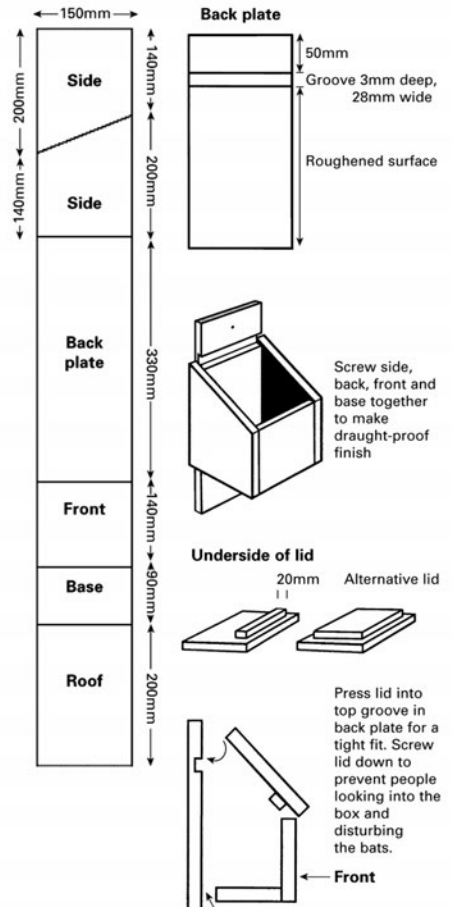
www.rspb.org.uk/hfw/advice/20



- Bats roost in a variety of places, such as old trees and buildings. However, many natural sites suffer damage from the weather, while buildings are often made uninhabitable for bats when sprayed with woodworm treatment.

BUILDING A BAT BOX

- Building a bat box is easy. Bats may take some time to find and use the box, but will return to it for many years once they have adopted it as a roost. Bats visit different roost sites throughout the year, according to their needs. They sometimes use a box for only a short period before departing again.
- Try to buy timber that has been approved by the Forest Stewardship Council. The FSC label guarantees that the timber has been sourced from sustainably managed forests.
- Salvaged timber is likely to be unusable, because of chemical treatments that it may have been subject to in the past. Bats are very sensitive to these treatments.
- It is better to use rough-textured wood, as this helps bats to get a good grip as they clamber around on the bat box. If the wood is smooth, rough it up with the teeth of a saw.
- To make a bat box you will need a plank of wood 150 mm (6 inches) wide and 25 mm (1 inch) thick. Follow the diagram (see right) to complete construction of the box.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Use only untreated wood – bats are sensitive to smells, and preservative chemicals may be harmful to them.
- It is best to site boxes on trees, although the sides of buildings can also be used. Three is an ideal number of boxes for a single tree, mounted to face north, south-east and south-west.
- Attach bat boxes to trees with wire around a trunk or branch, rather than with nails. Place a hosepipe or section of tyre over

the wire to prevent damage to the tree. Check fastenings every year.

- Make sure that there are no branches around the box, as bats like an uncluttered flight-path to and from their roost.
- Don't open the box. Bats are protected by law, and a special license is required to disturb or handle them.

HOMES FOR HEDGEHOGS



Hedgehog



- Hedgehogs are among our most familiar garden mammals. Seldom seen during the daytime, their nocturnal wanderings can take them through many gardens, where they feed on invertebrates, such as snails and slugs.
- They are very good at running, climbing and swimming. In cold winter weather they will go into hibernation, emerging only when conditions become warmer.
- Their nests can be quite large, and are usually made of mosses, grass, leaves and other garden debris. They can be found at the base of hedges or under thick bramble bushes, garden sheds or rubbish.
- ★ Encourage hedgehogs through appropriate garden management. Shrub beds and borders with a thick cover of plants provide safe foraging areas and shelter for roosting and hibernation. Hedgehogs also forage extensively on lawns. Maintaining different lengths of grass will give them a wider choice of insect foods on which to feed.
- As an alternative, cat food is a good choice of supplementary food, but bread and milk should be avoided. You may also be able to provide shelter by using a hedgehog box.

BUILDING A HEDGEHOG BOX

Another way that you can encourage hedgehogs to spend more time in your garden is by providing them with a home.

- A basic nestbox can be constructed from 12-mm- ($\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-) thick plywood. It should be around 600 x 400 x 300 mm ($23\frac{1}{2}$ x $15\frac{3}{4}$ x $11\frac{1}{16}$ inches) deep, and have an integral entrance chamber measuring 220 x 400 mm ($8\frac{1}{16}$ x $15\frac{3}{4}$), with entrance holes of 120 x 120 mm ($4\frac{3}{4}$ x $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches) at either end. The lid should be removable and overlap the sides of the box by 120 mm ($4\frac{3}{4}$ inches).

- Alternatively, you can purchase ready-made hedgehog nesting boxes from reputable wildlife organisations, including the RSPB.
- The box should be located out of direct sunlight, with the entrance facing away from prevailing winds. Place it in thick vegetation or behind or beneath a shed. It may help you to place the box in an appropriate location if you can find out where hedgehogs have built nests in the past.
- Once you have decided on a location and placed the box in position, resist the temptation to remove the lid to see if it is being used.
- It may take a year or more for hedgehogs to take up residence in the nestbox – or it may not happen at all. If no hedgehogs choose to adopt the box, it may indicate that they are finding adequate natural sites in which to nest.



Hedgehog



PROTECTING HEDGEHOGS

- Do not use slug pellets in the garden. There are safe, non-toxic alternatives for managing slugs.
- Hedgehogs habitually hide themselves in piles of leaves, grass cuttings, pampas grass, compost heaps, bags of rubbish and bonfires. Always check these before burning, cutting, strimming, mowing or disposing of rubbish.
- Many plastic items can trap, ensnare or cut a hedgehog. These include netting, plastic can holders, wide-necked bottles and pots. Dispose of these carefully.
- Hedgehogs can easily fall down holes or into water troughs, ponds, swimming pools and other types of water vessel. Always provide a gentle slope or ledge that will enable them to get out.
- Dogs can injure hedgehogs, so remain aware of what your dog is doing if it is in the garden late at night.
- If you accidentally disturb an active hedgehog nest, carefully replace any dislodged material. If there are young in the nest, do not touch them. Similarly, if you find a hibernating adult, avoid waking it. Should it wake, leave food until it hibernates again.