

Help the small creatures in the soil - the worms, the microbes and the plant-friendly bugs as well as the butterflies and bees to make our gardens healthy and productive

PLANT YOUR OWN WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY VEGETABLES

Growing your own food is an easy way to do your bit for our world. Gardener **Kate Bradbury** reveals how you can encourage wildlife and enjoy delicious, fresh food straight from your garden

Recently, there's been a surge of interest in edible gardening. And rightly so. It saves money, protects the planet and is incredibly satisfying. As an added bonus, you can grow veggies no matter what size garden you have – from a few pots on a patio to an allotment. But if you've not done it before, the prospect can be daunting – which veg to grow; how to prepare the soil, weed and feed; and what to do about bugs and slugs.

Traditionally, wildlife has been viewed as the enemy of the fruit and vegetable grower, with some species even labelled as pests. But it's possible – and even beneficial – to welcome wildlife into your veggie patch. Creating wild habitats not only helps threatened species, it also helps you. Leaving areas of long grass, wild flowers and a few nettles around the edge or nearby will provide shelter and food for beneficial insects, such as ladybirds, hoverflies and wasps. Common wasps are true gardener's friends and eat a wide range of veggie-chomping invertebrates, including caterpillars, aphids and ants.

Creating a pond to attract frogs and toads, or a log pile for hedgehogs, will encourage them to eat the slugs and other grubs that might plague your young plants. Fruit- or berry-bearing trees and shrubs provide food and shelter for blue tits and house sparrows, which will pay you back by



COMMON WASP
One of the best insect predators you can encourage to your garden, wasps eat caterpillars, aphids and small flies. Keep your distance and they won't harm you.

SALAD LEAVES
Varieties such as rocket and mizuna can be sown in the ground or in pots. Keep well watered and harvest the leaves as they appear.

HEDGEHOG
Shelters in long grass, log piles, beneath sheds and among fallen leaves. Eats beetles, worms and slugs, plus insect pests such as caterpillars.

RADISHES
You can sow radish seeds as early as February and harvest the roots just six weeks later. Don't allow the roots to become woody before harvesting.

pecking the caterpillars, aphids and other insects off your greens. And providing a large stone as an anvil may encourage song thrushes to bash the snails that chew holes in your leaves.

Creating a wildlife-friendly veg plot means more habitat for wildlife, less work for you and a constant supply of healthy, natural produce on your plate without the air miles. It's a great way to reconnect with food and conserve our world's precious natural resources. Here are five easy-to-grow veg to get you started...



BUSH TOMATOES
Bush tomatoes, such as the variety 'Gartenperle', are much easier to grow than other tomatoes, and best suited for growing in pots and hanging baskets. Simply water and feed regularly.

HOUSE SPARROW
Adult birds eat seeds, but they feed caterpillars and aphids to their young. They take pests from virtually any plant they can find them on, including beans, courgettes and brassicas.

COURGETTES
One of the easiest and most prolific crops to grow. Plant in moist, rich soil and water regularly. Can also be grown in pots.

BLUE TIT
It's thought that one blue tit chick can eat 100 caterpillars per day, so you really don't need to put nets over your brassicas (cabbages, broccoli, Brussels sprouts).

PURPLE SPROUTING BROCCOLI
This takes a long time to harvest but it's worth it. Sow in spring and harvest in winter. Nets can be used to protect them from caterpillars, but this can be avoided by welcoming wildlife.

SONG THRUSH
The greatest predators of snails. Make sure you provide a large flat stone for them to use as an anvil, on which they can smash snail shells.

HAVE YOU GOT GREEN FINGERS?

If your garden is buzzing with bees and home to hedgehogs, why not share your photos and top tips for creating a wildlife-friendly patch with us? Simply share on Instagram or Twitter with the hashtag **#GrowForYourWorld** and tag us at **@wwf_uk** – we can't wait to be inspired!