

Gardening Without Pesticides

You may wonder why wildlife gardeners are so concerned about pesticides. Pesticide use and habitat loss are the two main causes of the huge decline in insect biodiversity which we have seen in recent times. Gardeners can help to reduce the effect by using less pesticide, ideally none, as well as providing habitats.



Both the gardens in the photos are managed without pesticides and they show that you can have attractive gardens without pesticides. The choice of plants is very important. For instance if you grow plants which slugs and snails love such as Hostas you are bound to struggle. If you can find alternatives you will be far more successful. I have found that plants which are

not under stress can survive some damage but stressed plants e.g. in tubs will struggle.

If you stop using, or use less, pesticide the effect will not be instant but in about a year you will see more insects in the garden as well as the animals which feed on them. Predators such as ladybirds will appear if you can tolerate the greenfly and blackfly they feed on for a while.



The photo opposite shows our broad beans covered in blackfly with a hoverfly. The adults feed on nectar and pollen but the larvae feed on aphids (blackfly). We had a very good crop of beans as well as providing food for hoverflies which are good pollinators.

Stopping pesticide use resets the ecological balance in the garden so that predators control the "pests" instead of chemicals. Since we stopped using pesticides we have seen a year on year increase in the number of insects and the animals which feed on them. It is a delight to wander in the garden enjoying the wildlife.

Fruit and vegetable gardening without pesticides is also possible but does take some thought. You can use barriers such as fleece and netting and companion planting to deter pests. Companion plants are usually smelly and they confuse the insects. Good examples are Mint, Garlic, Lavender and Calendula.



If you would like to give this a try and need some advice ask Heather to put you in touch with me, I would love to help.

Photos by Helen Knell, Julian Fountain and Vicky Golding.