

# Helping Habitats

## Guidelines for Garden Contractors in Cookham



- *Cookham is a very special place and its rich natural spaces are much valued by the 5000 residents. There is increasing interest in “wild gardens” to create habitats to support wildlife such as bees, butterflies and birds. Awards for such gardens have been running since 2018.*
- *WildCookham recognises that many people need help in their gardens and we are keen to recommend contractors, landscapers and garden centres who support our wildlife friendly standards. If your company is one of them we can promote you to our members directly and on our website.*
- *The following guidelines have been established from local best practice and national organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)*



**TREES** are vital to much life on earth. A mature tree can support hundreds of species so they should only be destroyed after full consideration.

Check on Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and restrictions in Conservation areas.

Check for nests in foliage as well as holes within the tree before work is started during March to August. Birds will return to the same tree to nest.

**HEDGEROWS** – Many are protected by law even on private land. There are some simple rules:

- No hedge cutting, structural cutting or pruning from March to August as recommended by the RSPB. This avoids disturbing nesting birds who breed at this time. If essential, light trimming only having checked for nests.



- Wherever possible cut hedges on a 3 year rotation. Year 1 one side, Year 2 the top, Year 3 the other side. This allows spring growth to feed caterpillars and provide blossom for bees.
- Be aware of destroying habitat underneath. This may be home to small mammals and insects. Cookham has a dwindling number of glowworms, a hedge grubbed up could mean another habitat destroyed.

**BUILDINGS**, including small sheds - Be aware of nest sites in buildings for bats, swifts, swallows, house martins.

### **GENERAL GARDENING PRACTICE**

Plant nectar and pollen-rich flowers to provide food for pollinating insects all year round. Foxgloves, bluebells, aster and pulmonaria are good. Open, simple flowers are best for bees and butterflies. Try to avoid pansies, petunias, begonias as they have been bred for showy blooms not food.

- Avoid pesticides or use of slug pellets. They will do harm to many creatures we value such as hedgehogs and frogs.
- No chemical weed killer, eg. Roundup. For lawns, mulching is a great alternative. This means dropping finely shredded grass clippings back into the lawn supplying it with nutrients.
- Use peat-free compost to help preserve irreplaceable peat bog habitats.
- Tidying in autumn – try to leave alone as much as possible to provide winter habitat and food for insects.
- Woodpiles are really valuable –leave an area undisturbed and be aware of hibernating hedgehogs in winter.
- Leave gaps/holes under fences to allow animals such as hedgehogs to move around for foraging and breeding.

Promote the **Cookham Wild About Gardens Awards** to customers. This will help them develop their knowledge of how to help the wildlife in their gardens.

