

Colwall Greener
Gardening in harmony with nature and the natural environment
July 2022

When we think about our garden spaces, we might conclude that the way we tend them has little impact on the ecological and climate emergencies affecting the planet.

However, we would be wrong. Together, the UK's gardens are larger than all of our National Nature Reserves combined, making them as important for wildlife and the climate as they are for our wellbeing.

Here are some top tips for how to garden in harmony with nature and the natural environment:

1. **Leave part of your garden to nature;** let your lawn grow longer so that flowers have time to set seed. Embrace flowering lawn weeds, which are an excellent source of pollen such as dandelions, buttercups and clover. If you are not keen on a longer lawn, consider leaving a patch that is less frequently mown to give it a chance to bloom.
2. **Avoid using chemicals;** the production of artificial fertilisers and pesticides is energy intensive clocking up a large carbon footprint. In addition, common insecticides containing neonicotinoids kill many garden insects, including bees. An alternative is to make your own fertiliser using comfrey and nettle solutions and, over time, you will notice you have fewer pests as the garden re-establishes a natural balance.
3. **Plant for pollinators** - insects pollinate crops, recycle dead leaves and dung, control pests, help keep the soil healthy, and are food for many birds and mammals. By providing plants which attract pollinators, we are literally sustaining the cycle of life. Aim for a variety of flower shapes and flowering periods. Good examples include, foxgloves, honeysuckle, comfrey, geranium "rozanne", "catmint" *nepeta racemose*, lavender, marjoram and scabious. In general, avoid plants with double or multi-petalled flowers because pollinators find them difficult to access.
4. **Provide a pond;** ponds (of all sizes) increase garden biodiversity and can help prevent flooding by slowing down the flow of water in heavy rains. Ponds also store carbon.
5. **Plant a tree;** it's widely accepted that planting trees can make a dramatic difference to the climate, with some absorbing up to four tonnes of carbon dioxide over 20 years. They also provide shade in summer, help to reduce flooding in winter and are an important habitat for wildlife.
6. **Ditch the diesel;** the average petrol power tool emits 0.848 kg carbon per litre of petrol used. Consider swapping your petrol mower for an electric one, and using hand tools rather than hedge trimmers, leaf blowers and strimmers. You will spend more time doing these jobs, but you may find you prefer taking things at a more relaxed pace.
7. **Use peat free compost;** by using peat-free compost we help to ensure peat bogs remain intact and carbon dioxide is not released into the atmosphere. It can be hard to find peat free compost in garden centres but there are local suppliers in Herefordshire, and a huge range available online. You might also wish to make your own compost.
8. **Save water;** we are coming into some of the driest months in the South of the UK. Rather than turning on the mains tap to water the garden, collect water that falls onto your roof in a butt Aim to water your garden in the evening to reduce loss from

evaporation. Use a watering can instead of a hose or sprinkler. Finally, consider planting drought-resistant plants such as hebes, lavenders, buddleias and rosemary.

9. **Hedges not fences**; hedges are excellent for the environment because they provide shelter and food for a variety of wildlife, as well as absorbing pollution. They also look lovely, particularly a flowering hedge such as bird friendly blackthorn.

There are people in village who have specialist knowledge on some of the topics mentioned above. If you have any questions, please contact us and we will put you in touch with someone who can help with your query. You might also like to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

A brief reminder: Colwall Greener meets approx. every quarter and the next meeting will be on **23rd August 2022 in the Colwall Village Garden Apple Packing Shed at 6.30pm**. Anyone is warmly welcome to attend but please let us know by messaging us via the 'Contact us' page on our website so we can ensure there are sufficient refreshments.

****SAVE THE DATE****

There will be a free **Colwall Greener Relaunch Event in the Village Hall on 12th November 2022** with lots of stands, talks and activities.