

# wilder

ST ALBANS



SCHOOLS INFORMATION PACK



Enhancing the wildlife value of school grounds  
and learning outside the classroom

# OUR AIMS

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are working in partnership with St Albans City and District Council to create a Wilder St Albans. The project aims to increase the habitats across St Albans District and the wildlife they support by facilitating and coordinating a programme of practical action by the local community.

## WILDLIFE NEEDS SPACE!

Globally and in Hertfordshire, wildlife and habitats are in decline and we simply need to make more space for wildlife to thrive. What we have now in terms of habitat is not enough to halt this decline. At least 30% of land and sea needs to be connected and protected for nature’s recovery by 2030. This is considered the bare minimum and we are far short of this now.

30% is tangible, we can apply it to wherever we are, whether it is in our parks, verges, gardens or school grounds. It is something that we can all work towards. If your school is already taking action for wildlife, then you are already helping to create a Wilder St Albans. So how good are your school grounds for wildlife and how can you work towards that 30% target? This pack will guide you through the steps to consult, plan and implement successful projects with practical advice, inspiring ideas and suggestions.

For more information please visit: [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans)



This booklet has sections for different habitat types and includes tips for linking Wilder activity to the National Curriculum



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## INVOLVING CHILDREN

- Ideas should be child initiated as much as possible. Decisions are shared with adults who support planning and implementation of the projects.
- Children will be the end users and benefactors of changes to the grounds and can have lots of ideas that will enhance their learning outside.
- Encouraging active participation from the consultation and planning phases through to building, excavating, planting, ongoing maintenance and management can evoke a true sense of ownership, pride and respect for the childrens' environment.
- All stages of development can offer children learning opportunities linked to the National Curriculum. Long term projects could inspire cross curriculum links, becoming an integral theme running through a term or whole school year.
- Active participation can increase the self confidence or self esteem of pupils. New skills or hidden talents can be nourished and celebrated.



**“Projects need problem solving, collaboration and decision making; all skills that link to PSHE and Citizenship curriculum.”**



**Pupils could report on progress using multimedia tools such as digital cameras, time lapse video, blogs and social media.**



**Visit nature reserves with the children for inspiration on how to manage land to attract wildlife, provide habitats and benefit biodiversity.**

## SITE SURVEY – KNOW WHAT IS THERE

The first step is to develop a site map and identify the needs of the site to develop habitats for wildlife and provide educational and recreational opportunities. It is important in the planning stages to involve the children in identifying these needs as full participation can help foster an affinity and appreciation of the grounds and wildlife.

- **Measuring perimeters**, calculating areas and develop scale drawings.
- **Recording species**: plants, minibeasts (including pond life), small mammals (or signs of) and birds.
- **Investigate the soil types**: clay/sandy/stony/acidic/neutral/alkaline.
- **Measure the microclimate**: light levels/wind/shelter/water/slopes/direction facing.
- **Plot the areas** which already contain useful habitats (such as trees, hedges, meadows, ponds, garden and woodland).
- **Survey the current use of areas** and mark on the plan areas which are currently underused. It can also be useful to investigate how children use certain areas when supervised and when unsupervised. Use the results of your observations to plan pathways and boundaries.
- **Find out and mark constraints** that could affect site changes on your plot diagram, e.g. overhead power lines, underground cables, pipes, land drains etc. and mark boundaries. Check ownership with local authorities.

\*A site or area survey could form part of a Maths, Design & Technology, Geography, Science or Biology project.



Why not download our free 'How Wild Are We in 60 minutes' survey to record the species you have in your school grounds.

## PLANNING NEXT STEPS



Once your survey and maps are complete, use them to plan the development of habitats for wildlife and address your specific needs.

- **Visit other sites** with the children; determine which habitats are suited to the areas you want improved.
- **Fit the design to the topography** and conditions of the area e.g. plant a butterfly herb garden in an area with full sun and use existing topography to your benefit.
- **Involve as many people as you can** to help you with planning, fundraising, design, construction and long term care: teachers, pupils, caretakers, teaching assistants, governors, contractors, neighbours, parents.
- **Develop a long term management plan** with grounds staff: involve the children in simple management tasks.
- **Take before and after pictures:** involve pupils in recording the progress of a project using social media, blogs, e-newsletters as part of an ICT project.
- **Check if your plans will need planning permission** from St Albans City and District Council.
- **Complete risk assessments** and check what health & safety and safeguarding controls would need to be put in place for the safety of all those involved in your project, such as children, parents and contractors.
- **Consider your costs,** budgets and seek funding if needed.



- **Research traditional management methods that support nature conservation as part of a Local History project**
- **Pupils or the PTA could plan and organise a fundraising event.**



- **If an area is underused by classes in the summer due to a lack of shade,** planting trees, shrubs or perhaps constructing a willow structure could address this need and provide areas for minibeast hunts, or resources for art sculpture projects. Source native species and whips where possible from reputable suppliers, they are cheaper and require less intensive management. Will neighbours be affected? Often being overlooked can help avoid issues of unauthorised access.

# CREATURE FEATURES

Activity Sheet 1

**HEDGEHOGS, NEWTS, FROGS, BUTTERFLIES, HOVERFLIES, LACEWINGS, LADYBIRDS AND SOLITARY WASPS MAY ALL BE SEARCHING FOR SUITABLE HIBERNATION SITES ON YOUR SCHOOL GROUNDS.**



### GOOD FOR..

Various bugs, solitary bees, mason bees, solitary wasps, beetles, spiders, ladybirds.

### MATERIALS..

Block of wood, log, fence post, brick, drill and bit 5-10mm diameter.

### HOW TO..

Drill holes of various widths, 90mm deep into logs and/ or wood blocks, fence posts or bricks.



### GOOD FOR..

Green Lacewing (Tip: lacewings are attracted to house lights - so install bottle chamber near house.)

### MATERIALS..

Plastic bottle (1 or 2 litre size is perfect) with top. Roll of corrugated cardboard 80-100cm long. Wire and scissors.

### HOW TO..

Cut bottom off bottle, roll card and insert, fix with wire so bottle covers card with 5cm overhang. Hang in dense foliage, preferably by mid - Aug. Tilt at an angle to ensure rain does not collect and can drain out.



### GOOD FOR..

Bees.

### MATERIALS..

Log, bamboo cane, block of wood, saw, drill and nails.

### HOW TO..

Place in a sunny spot. Cut a 30cm length of log with diagonal sides. Drill several holes 90mm deep. Cut the block of wood in two to make roof. Fix to log with nails, fill with bamboo pieces.



### GOOD FOR..

Hedgehogs

### MATERIALS..

Medium sized plastic box, Stanley knife, leaf litter, dry grass or straw, carrier bag, twigs and dry leaves.

### HOW TO..

Cut two air vents & an entrance into the plastic box. Put some leaf litter inside, with dry grass or straw on top. Tuck the box by a hedge and cover with twigs, dry grass and leaves.

**\* MANY OF THESE SUGGESTIONS CAN BE MADE USING SCRAP AND RECYCLED MATERIALS!**



For more resources on other features you could make visit: [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans)

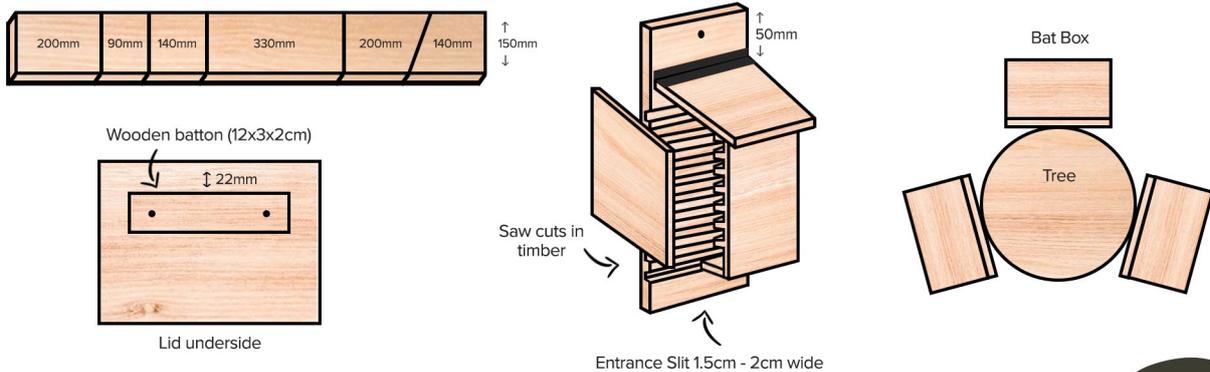


# CREATURE FEATURES

## Activity Sheet 2

### BUILDING A BAT BOX

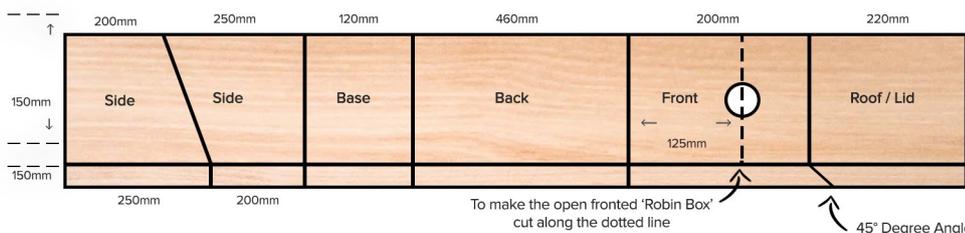
1. Make the box from rough saw timber. Make sure the wood is untreated as many wood preservatives can be fatal to bats. Cut the grooves in the inside panels to give the bats something to cling on to. You'll also need a piece of scrap rubber and some nails.
2. The best place to position a bat box is on a tree - bats like to move from one box to another during the day and from season as temperatures change.
3. Put the boxes as high as possible above the ground to avoid predators - some species of bat prefer to roost at least 5 metres off the ground.
4. Clear away surrounding branches to give them a clear flight path.
5. Boxes can also be located on buildings. A good position is under the eaves and at the gable apex to protect them from bad weather. You can also paint the top, front and sides black to absorb solar heat. Bats can take a while to investigate new premises, but if your box is not occupied within 3 years, try moving it. You can check if the box is being used by looking for crumbly or black droppings on the ground.



### BUILDING A BIRD BOX

You will need:

1. Rough cut, unplanned, untreated softwood timber, 150mm wide x 1500mm long x 15mm thick.
2. Scrap rubber, such as an old inner tube from a tyre.
3. Galvanised 20mm (3/4") nails.
4. Carpentry saw, hammer, hand brace or drill (with 25mm, 28mm, or 38mm diameter cutting bits), pencil and ruler, scissors for cutting rubber.





## WILDLIFE POND

A pond can be an expensive feature to construct and maintain so it is important to consider the educational value and how it will be used during the planning stages. A pond can provide benefits across the curriculum; science applications are the most obvious, although there are many other creative learning opportunities a pond can bring.

- **The larger the pond the better:** at least 20 square metres - it will be richer in wildlife and easier to maintain in a balanced state. A longer edge allows more space for children to access the water's edge. A large pond allows you to have at least 75cm depth (to stop it freezing over in winter) and gently sloping sides so that wildlife can get in and out.
- **Design 2/3rds of the pond margin to be child-friendly** with boardwalk or paving and the remainder wildlife friendly with irregular shallow bays, ledges and tall plants. Locate your platforms on the south side to reduce sunlight reflection when looking in the water.
- **Include sheltered areas** (e.g. with workbenches and shade if possible) away from the dipping/viewing areas where children can be engaged in other activities such as identifying minibeasts or using microscopes whilst waiting for their turn on the platform
- **Measure the microclimate:** this could include light levels, wind direction and areas of shelter, direction of slopes, temperature of the water and the air. Make a record and then check how it changes or is different in different areas of the pond.
- **Raised ponds may improve accessibility** and be a solution for small spaces. They can be incorporated into a slope to look more natural and provide access for wildlife.
- **Avoid shade** - a sunny, sheltered spot is best.
- **Avoid overhanging trees** - rotting leaves will reduce the amount of oxygen in the pond and cause it to 'silt up'.



Use the pond to inspire art or creative writing, e.g. the lifecycle of a dragonfly, the movement of a Whirlygig beetle etc. Please download the Wilder St Albans Pond Pack which is crammed full of resources and toolkits to support learning around a pond at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans).



# POND EXCAVATION



Try to locate your pond close to buildings that have water butts for topping up your pond in summer. Tap water can affect the water chemistry and cause an imbalance and algal blooms, as can run off water from fertilised ground.

- Where will the spoil go? Can it be used for landscaping? Could you turn it into a butterfly mound or a beetle bank?
- Ensure enough depth by the dipping platforms so that when water levels drop in the summer, the children can still reach the pond with nets.
- Do not introduce fish - they will eat all the minibeasts!
- Stock your pond with native plants from a reputable supplier and let the wildlife colonise naturally - introducing plants and animals (such as frog spawn) from other ponds is not advised as you may introduce unwanted invasive species or diseases.



**i** Remember to check all your pond excavation plans with St Albans City and District Council.



Archaeology and local history: involve children and parents in the excavation of the pond, and help to bring local history to life by investigating any items you find as they dig. As well as the extra adults providing a bit of muscle, a community effort will raise levels of pride and ownership in the project.



# PLANTING AND POND CARE



## RECOMMENDED POND PLANTS + SPECIES TO AVOID...

### Submerged plants

Rigid hornwort  
Curled pondweed  
Alternate water-milfoil  
Common water-milfoil  
Spiked water-milfoil  
Whorled water-milfoil

### Floating leaved plants

Frogbit  
White water lily  
Yellow water lily  
Water-plantain  
Common water-crowfoot

### Emergent plants for cover in shallow water

Brooklime  
Bur-reed  
Flowering rush  
Water forget-me-not  
Water-plantain  
Yellow flag iris  
Marsh-marigold  
Arrowhead  
Amphibious bistort  
Greater spearwort  
Lesser spearwort

### Damp places & marsh edges

Purple-loosestrife  
Common valerian  
Water mint  
Water figwort  
Soft rush  
Pendulous sedge  
Meadowsweet  
Ragged-robin  
Lady's-smock  
Yellow loosestrife

### ▲ Invasive plants to avoid

New Zealand pygmyweed  
Water fern  
Parrot's-feather  
Canadian/Nuttall's waterweed  
Floating pennywort  
Curly waterweed  
Water primrose  
Water hyacinth  
Water lettuce  
Fringed water lily

## POND CARE

### Spring

It is important not to disturb your pond during spring as this is the time when aquatic insects begin to emerge and there is lots of activity below the surface.



### Summer

- Keep your pond topped up with rain water rather than tap water.
- Aim to keep pond 3/4 full with plants.
- Remove blanket weed and duckweed.
- Watch out for and remove invasive species and water fern. They are hard to get rid of once established.
- If you remove any plant material from the pond, leave it in a pile by the side of the pond for 48 hours to allow wildlife to escape.

### Autumn/winter

Maintenance work should be carried out in autumn when there is less activity, but before pond creatures are dormant.

#### Every year:

Remove the looser vegetation so that just 3/4 of the pond is dense with plants.

#### Every 2 or 3 years:

Lift reeds, iris and other plants with rootstocks, split and plant 1/3 back.



Conduct annual pond health check surveys with pupils, recording the biodiversity in and around the pond area, use the data for Science and Maths projects.

## WILDFLOWER MEADOW

Wildflowers and grasses prefer soil that is **nutrient poor**. If there is an area of grass that can be left uncut for most of the year, then sowing wildflower seeds or planting pot grown flowers could provide a natural home for butterflies, bees, crickets and a variety of other invertebrates.

### HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN MEADOW

**Wildflowers need sunshine so choose a sunny spot for your meadow if possible. Meadows come in all shapes and sizes. Your meadow can be as small or as large as you can make it.**

#### TWO WAYS TO GO...

There are two ways to establish a meadow. One is easy to do and the other requires more work.

##### Leave it to grow

With this method you simply leave a sunny patch of grass to grow, allowing different flowers and other plants to establish naturally. Stop cutting your designated patch in March and see what happens through spring and summer. You'll be surprised what grows!

##### Strip and sow

- This method takes more work but will produce colourful results. It can be done in spring or autumn.
- Remove as much of the existing grass and vegetation as you can. You should be left with patches of bare earth.
- Rake the area to break up the soil's surface.
- Sow your seeds in mid-March to mid-May (spring sowing) or late August to late October (autumn sowing).
- Scatter the seeds over your patch. About 1tsp or 3g per square metre.
- Seeds don't need to be buried but walk over your patch to make sure the seed has good contact with the soil.
- Keep the meadow watered until your wildflowers have become established.

#### WHAT SEEDS TO SOW

It is worth checking what sort of soil you have and its pH before you choose which seeds to sow: wildflower seed merchants supply mixes suitable for various soil types and situations. If you have picked a poor patch of ground for your meadow that hasn't been cultivated recently, choose a perennial wildflower mix. If your soil fertility is too high for perennial wildflowers to flourish, consider sowing a cornfield annual mix that includes plants like cornflower, corn poppy, corn marigold, and corncockle, with some barley and wheat seed to add an authentic touch.



**Wildflower seeds outcompete other plants on poor soils. Don't be tempted to 'help' your seed by adding artificial fertilizers, compost or manure.**



Your class could grow plants from seed. Perhaps even design and make clothes for optimising growing conditions.

## WILDFLOWER MEADOW

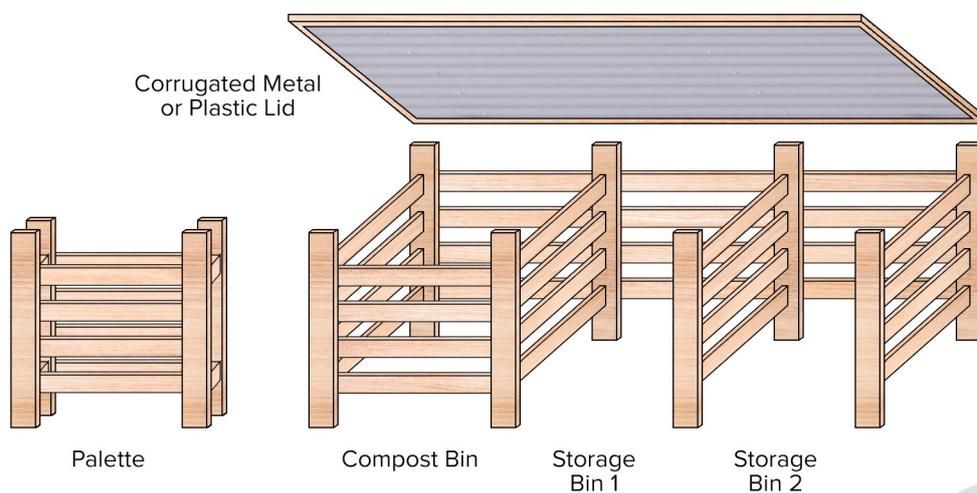
A mown path through the meadow gives pupils somewhere to walk and explore from without trampling the habitat. You could give dry cuttings used for hay to class pets or make a compost heap.

### MANAGING YOUR MEADOW

Your meadow won't need a lot of attention once it's established, just a bit of regular maintenance:

- Regularly remove thistles, docks, trees seedling and any grasses that look like they are taking over.
- Cut the meadow each year in late August or early September. Be sure to leave the cuttings on the patch for around a week before removing and composting them. This allows the seeds to drop and replenish your meadow.
- Always leave a patch over winter before cutting in early spring. Your meadow's dead stems will provide excellent insect hibernation homes over winter. You may want to top up your meadow in its first years of life, sowing more seeds to fill any bare patches.

### BUILD A COMPOST BIN



For more information visit: [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/actions/how-compost-your-waste](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/actions/how-compost-your-waste)



Investigate the soil type as part of a rocks and soils topic, use upside down recycled plastic bottles filled with different soils, (e.g. gravel, clay, silt, sand) and record how long it takes for a volume of water to pass through.

# BUTTERFLY GARDEN



An ideal feature for a sunny corner and can double up as a sensory garden, as many 'butterfly plants' are herbs. Developing the plot, building raised beds, growing herbs from seeds and tending to the plants may be an ideal project for a school gardening club. Some plants are a good nectar source for adult butterflies & moths; others are food plants for caterpillars - ideally try to ensure both are available. Pupils could conduct a micro-climate survey to identify a suitable area using tools such as wind spinners, thermometers and light metres. If there is an available power supply, you could set up an overnight moth trap. The moths will need to be released into suitable hiding places in the morning to resume their sleep.

**i**  
 Introduce pollinators and growing plants, part of Science KS 1-4 Life Processes and Living Things

## ATTRACTING ADULTS TO FEED: NECTAR-RICH PLANTS

SEASON	PLANT LIST
SPRING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blackthorn</li> <li>Bramble</li> <li>Goat willow</li> <li>Common valerian</li> <li>Hyacinth</li> <li>Honesty</li> <li>Field forget-me-not</li> <li>Aubretia</li> <li>Hedge roundwort</li> <li>Alyssum</li> <li>Wallflower</li> <li>Primrose</li> </ul>
SUMMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red campion</li> <li>Ragged-robin</li> <li>Bird's-foot trefoil</li> <li>Raspberry</li> <li>Wild teasel</li> <li>Hemp agrimony</li> <li>Common fleabane</li> <li>Yarrow</li> <li>Meadow crane's-bill</li> <li>Purple-loosestrife</li> <li>Common knapweed</li> </ul>
AUTUMN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field scabious</li> <li>Lobelia</li> <li>Phlox sp.</li> <li>Ox-eye daisy</li> <li>Lavenders</li> <li>Mint sp.</li> <li>French marigold</li> <li>Wild marjoram</li> <li>Common ivy</li> <li>Heather sp.</li> <li>Wild carrot</li> <li>Chives</li> <li>Wild thyme</li> </ul>
WINTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devil's-bit scabious</li> <li>Honeysuckle</li> <li>Nasturtium sp.</li> <li>Common ivy</li> <li>Ice plant</li> <li>Michaelmas daisy</li> <li>Verbenas</li> <li><i>*Leaving a portion of long grass uncut can provide overwinter food for butterflies and moths.</i></li> </ul>

### CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS ATTRACT THE FOLLOWING SPECIES;

Bird's-foot-trefoil	Common blue	Hop	Comma
Black medick	Common blue	Holly/common ivy	Holly blue
Dock	Small copper	Alder buckthorn	Brimstone
Sorrel sp.	Small copper	Nasturtium sp.	Large white, small white
Garlic mustard	Orange-tip, green-veined white	Honesty	Orange-tip
Lady's-smock	Orange-tip	Sweet rocket	Orange-tip
Common Nettle	Small tortoiseshell, comma, peacock, red admiral		



# A HEALTHY EATING GARDEN

Growing food in your school grounds is an excellent way to support children in understanding healthy eating, the origins of food and the importance of protecting biodiversity.

- **You can grow fruit and vegetables in any sized area** of your school grounds which receives plenty of sun, water and is sheltered from the wind.
- **You may need to consider storage space** such as a shed or greenhouse.
- **Use the shape and area to inform the planting plan.** If there is room for raised beds, position the beds to maximise the amount of sunlight reaching the plants.
- **Ensure children can access and reach the plants** in the beds, perhaps laying bark on paths between the beds to keep weeds at bay with suitable paths to and from storage sheds (or similar) that children can take a wheelbarrow down.
- **Provide children with information about growing and harvesting times** and the dates of school terms when planning the planting. It would be a shame if the fruits of their labour were wasted! Potatoes, carrots and broad beans could be planted in spring to then be harvested in July. Squashes, pumpkins and courgettes could be harvested in the autumn provided they are kept watered over the summer.



Work with the school kitchen staff to plan menus utilising harvested crops or use the produce during Home Economics lessons.



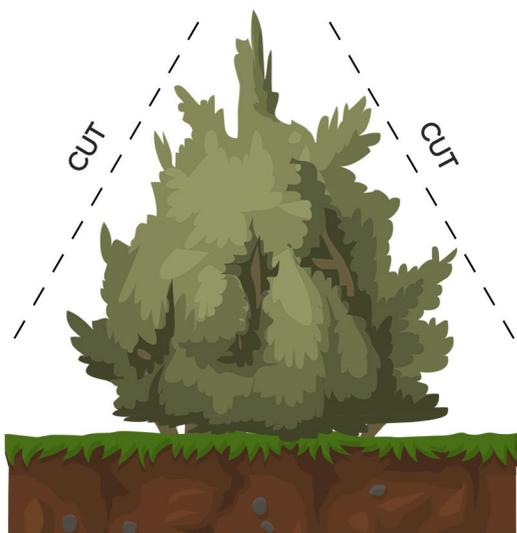
- Link growing activities to where food comes from, air miles and global warming, food chains and interdependence.
- Containers, hanging baskets, vertical planting frames & recycled receptacles such as plastic bottles can make the most of small spaces.
- Investigate changes to native plant phenology as they adapt to a changing climate.



Consider how plants will be looked after outside the school term. Is there direct access to the plots and/or greenhouses and sheds in the holidays? Who will be doing the watering?

## HEDGES

An existing old hedge adds much educational value to the school grounds and is an excellent habitat for wildlife.



If there are gaps in an existing hedge, fill the gaps with native shrubs, wildflowers such as primroses or plant climbers such as honeysuckle.

Evergreen climbers such as ivy provide shelter for over-wintering butterflies and insects, nesting for birds in the spring and the berries provide food in the autumn and winter.

If an existing hedge is trimmed into an A shape, rather than a flat cut top, it will encourage bushy leafy growth around the base, forming cover for small mammals.

### NATIVE HEDGEROW PLANTS

#### Evergreen

Holly (*Berries*)  
Yew (*Poisonous*) (*Berries*)  
Common ivy (*Berries, Flowers*)

#### Non-Evergreen

Hawthorn (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Blackthorn (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Hazel (*Nuts*)  
Guelder rose (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Dog rose (*Hips, Flowers*)  
Field rose (*Hips, Flowers*)  
Crab apple (*Fruit, Flowers*)

Goat willow (*Flowers*)  
Wild cherry (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Bird cherry (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Spindle (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Elder (*Berries, Flowers*)  
Honeysuckle (*Berries, Flowers*)

A cross curriculum project could involve pupils measuring the perimeter, mapping and confirming the age of hedges by looking at historic maps. The estimated age could be established by pacing out 30m and counting the number of shrub species x100 (Hopper's Rule) - don't be fooled by younger hedges planted with a variety of species, look how thick the stems are for a clue.

**i**  
 “Preferably cut in early spring, to avoid disturbing nesting birds.”

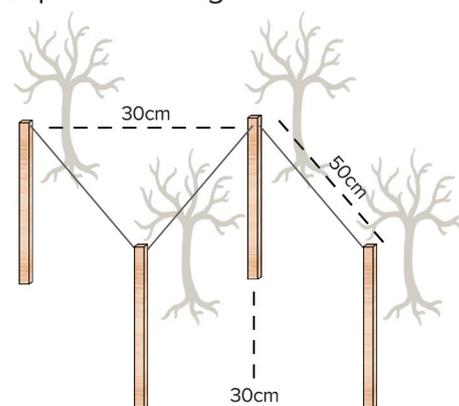
## HEDGES

Creating a new hedgerow

### PREPARING THE SITE + PLANTING THE HEDGE

To achieve a thick hedge, it is advisable to plant at least 6 whips (unbranched young tree seedlings) per metre, in double staggered rows.

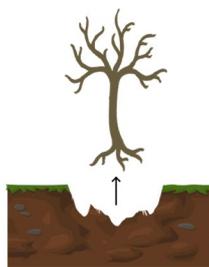
1. **Dig over the selected site**, removing all weeds and roots.
2. **Mix in plenty of well-rotted manure or other organic matter** to provide the new hedge with plenty of food, help the soil to hold more moisture and improve drainage.
3. **If the soil is heavy clay, add some grit and sand** to improve drainage further.
4. **Mark out two lines of string** about 50cm apart, along the line of your new hedgerow.
5. **Using 30cm lengths of string on cane pegs, mark out the distance** between the plants, creating a zig-zag pattern.
6. **Dig a single hole for each plant** or a continuous trench.
7. **Place the whips in the hole/trench** up to the root collar (a slight change in colour should indicate the level) and back fill with soil.
8. **Water well using grey water** (the waste from baths, showers, washing machines, dishwashers and sinks) or collected rain water, whenever possible. If grazing by rabbits or deer may be a problem, use a recycled or reused tree guard and remember to remove the guard when it is no longer needed to avoid plastic waste.



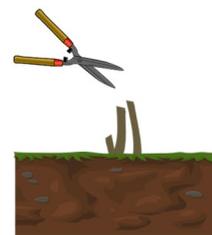
### DURING THE FIRST YEAR



During the first summer you should weed around the base of the plant (at least 30cm). This will prevent competition from grasses and other plants. However, mulch placed along the length of the hedgerow will prevent weeds growing in the first place. If there is a spell of dry weather, don't forget to water them too.



You may find in late summer that some trees and shrubs have died. These gaps should be replaced with new shrubs in the autumn or winter.



In the first spring you should cut shrubs down to 45-60cm above the ground. This hard pruning encourages the shrubs to bush out and will help create a nice thick hedge.



## WOODLAND

**Such a long term feature needs careful thought.** A new plantation or area allowed to naturally succeed to woodland will only start to look or feel like woodland after about 30 years. During that time, it may need some management: suppression of weeds to start with and thinning out unwanted/dead or diseased specimens as they develop. Ongoing management may require removal of low branches, hazardous trees and coppicing of suitable species.

Developing woodland as a long term project involving children can be a very special experience for the school as a whole. For example, oak and horse chestnut seeds and saplings could be collected and cared for by children entering the school in reception and then planted out by those children in years 2 or 3 between November and March.

**The developing woodland could provide inspiration for many areas and stages of the curriculum planning. For example, learning about how plants grow, adaptations and habitats, design and technology projects (*insect homes, bird or bat boxes, perhaps with live camera feeds to school*), English and PSHE debates, considering the benefits of planting trees versus using land for other purposes in urban environments etc.**



**Plant woodland flora such as spring bulbs, primroses and ferns from a reputable supplier.**



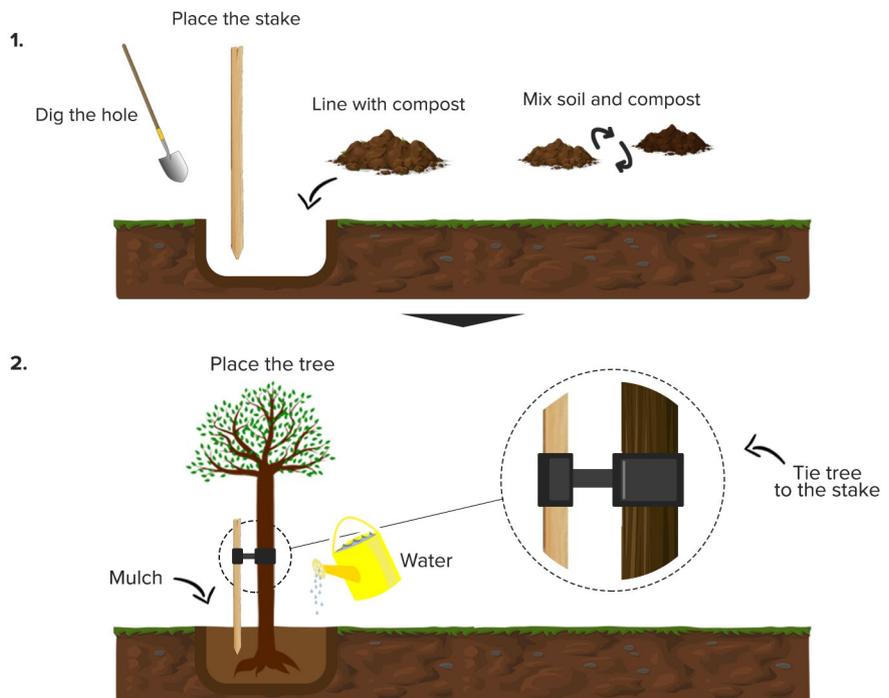
**If bats are present, they must only be handled by licensed people. Contact your local Bat Group when you want to check the boxes.**

# WOODLAND

## WHEN AND WHERE TO PLANT

The best time to plant trees and shrubs is between November and March. This is the period when trees are dormant and so can be moved with minimal damage. Avoid planting in extremes of temperature or windy weather. Never plant in soil that is frozen or water logged. Before purchasing, check that your chosen tree(s) will be suitable for your soil type and always plant them at least their mature height's distance from the building. Only use certified native trees of local provenance if possible. This maximises the amount of wildlife they can support and minimises the risk of introducing tree diseases.

### What you'll need:



## DEAD WOOD

You can improve the wildlife value of your woodland by allowing piles of logs & brushwood to decay. Many invertebrates such as beetles, spend the majority of their lives burrowing inside dead wood. These decomposers are a vital part of the ecosystem, attracting predators such as centipedes, birds and larger mammals.

Ensure you have a supply of suitably sized logs for the class to turn over for minibeast hunts. Larger logs that are too big to turn over make good seating in a clearing, perhaps around a fire circle for bushcraft, singing, story-telling, music, drama or an outdoor learning programme.





If your school already has a woodland area, it may benefit from introducing a variety of native species such as rowan and field maple.

## COPPICING



If your woodland consists of hardwoods such as **birch, alder, willow, sweet chestnut** and in particular **hazel**, coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management that these species respond to very well and can improve light levels to the woodland floor. You cut the chosen tree or shrub right down to ground level, and let the individual shoots grow from the stump.

These can be harvested when they are the right size for what you need

Hazel grows quickly and a regular sized 'stool' can produce a large number of small diameter stems that can be useful in many projects, from den making to whittling.

## WILLOW DOMES AND TUNNELS

**Coppiced willow is a sustainable resource.** It is naturally bendy and pliable so well suited to weaving projects. Willow whips that are cut during the winter, kept moist and replanted as soon as possible are likely to take root and shoots will grow in the spring. It is easy to create beautiful living sculptures such as tunnels and domes and can be an excellent hands-on project the whole school can participate in. Every spring the living willow sculpture will produce new stems which can be cut to provide more willow whips for future weaving projects. A willow dome can provide a shaded den area for children to play in or a reflective space for small groups to listen to stories, write poems or create artwork.



# PUT YOUR SCHOOL'S NAME ON THE WILDER ACTIONS MAP!

## FURTHER ACTIONS

Please visit our website and plot your actions on our Wilder Actions Map at [hertswildlifetrust.org/wilderstalbans](https://hertswildlifetrust.org/wilderstalbans). By each sharing our individual actions across the District we can see how much positive change we are all making together – improving the nature network around us.

**EVERY ACTION, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**

Once you have added your action to the map we will gift you a plaque that you can proudly display in your wild space or outside the front of your school – telling everyone that you are part of a **WILDER ST ALBANS**.



Why not join the Wilder St Albans Community Facebook group and share ideas, ask questions, find inspiration and shout about what you are doing! visit: [facebook.com/groups/wilderstalbans](https://facebook.com/groups/wilderstalbans)

## PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

p1: Hedgehog – Tom Marshall | Bug hunting – Amy Lewis p2: Boy with magnifier - David Tipling  
p3: Family pond dipping - Ross Hoddinott p5: Red admiral – Nick Upton p6: Insect Hotel – Ross Hoddinott | Bee hotel – Vaughn Matthews | Hedgehog – Tom Marshall | Lacewing Chamber – Heidi Carruthers p8: Hands in pond – Penny Dixie p9: Hands in pond – Penny Dixie p10: Frog – Katrina Martin p13: Comma – Derek Moore p14: Carrot – Tom Marshall.

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