

Community Gardening



Dorset  
Wildlife Trust

# Plant Guide

Wildlife-friendly gardening



# COMMUNITY GARDEN - PLANT GUIDE

Welcome to this quick guide to planting a wildlife-friendly community garden. Inside this leaflet you'll find some great plants to include in your garden for many different purposes. These recommended plants also tend to be avoided by slugs!



Blue tit and apple  
© Bob Coyle



Sensory plants  
© Katie Wilkinson



Corn marigold  
© Richard Burkmar



Mint  
© Philip Precey



Lavender  
© Katie Wilkinson



Ivy  
© Katie Wilkinson



Climbers  
© Katie Wilkinson

# TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNITY PLANTS

## 1 EDIBLE PLANTS, HERBS AND FRUIT

**Edible plants:** These are great for children - easy to grow and fun to eat! Try the curry plant - it has edible flowers and spicy scented foliage!

**Herbs:** Grow well in containers – leave some to flower for the bees.

**Fruit:** Select undemanding hardy varieties for the best results.

## 2 SENSORY PLANTS

**Sound:** Plant hardy grasses to create a relaxing 'sound' garden. They tolerate frequent handling to generate sounds when disturbed, or on windy days. Plant with rocks to make the area ideal for reptiles too!

**Touch:** Choose tough, hardy, tactile species which tolerate frequent handling.

**Scent:** Many are scented, easy to grow in sun and best planted in clusters. Also see the climbing plants section overleaf for scented honeysuckles.

## 3 SECURITY PLANTS AND HEDGING

To discourage access, these plants come with defences! They are easy to grow, even in the shade (apart from nettles which like sun).

## 4 CLIMBING PLANTS

Brighten up old walls, metal railings, or shed roofs. Climbers provide shelter for bird boxes and insect houses. Some are self-supporting, such as ivy, others like honeysuckle or rose will need support; this does not have to be expensive, willow, hazel sticks or garden-wire are ideal. Leave a gap behind trellis for birds to nest!

## 5 WILDFLOWER PLANTING

**Meadow:** Purchase an annual seed mix if you plan to prepare the soil every spring and leave flowers to set seed in summer. Alternatively get a perennial seed mix if you wish to sow seeds once and then mow once or twice a year.

**Wildflower patch:** The easiest way to encourage wildflowers is to leave an area undisturbed. Remove most grass plus any dominant species and over time, you may get flowers such as wild carrot, bird's-foot trefoil, cat's ears and more. To speed things up, add plug plants in spring (teasel, evening primrose and cowslip are reliable). In late summer or autumn, sow yellow rattle to weaken the grass, preventing it from outcompeting the wildflowers. For a quick result, you can buy wildflower turf, which you lay like a lawn.

# EDIBLE PLANTS

## STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries give reliable crops. Perpetual strawberries will fruit all summer (Sweet eve) and runners provide free plants each year!

Wild strawberries are tough, low growing and spread easily, covering beds to prevent weed growth, producing small, sweet fruit.



Borage  
© Jane Taylor

## FLOWERS

These bright flowers are great for children and also taste nice in a salad!

- **Nasturtium:** peppery orange, red or yellow flowers and green foliage all edible in salads. 'Cabbage white' caterpillars enjoy the leaves too, luring them away from eating other crops!
- **Borage:** freely self-seeding, with beautiful bright blue flowers edible in salads - or freeze in ice cubes to add a glimpse of summer to winter drinks. It makes a good 'tea' to feed plants too!
- **Marigold:** gorgeous, sunny flowers to brighten up a salad.

## SHRUB FRUIT

Blackcurrant (Big Ben) and redcurrant (Junifer) shrubs will provide fruit for many years with minimal attention; buy as 'bare root' plants in winter for bargains.

## HERBS

- **Spearmint:** rapidly growing herb; tastes great when cooked to perk up green veg dishes. Children love it and its delicate flowers are edible too!
- **Rosemary:** fragrant leaves ideal to flavour roasted vegetables.
- **Chives:** delicious 'onion' tasting leaves chopped in salads/potatoes.
- **Mint:** try different varieties (e.g. apple mint - zesty taste!), flowers are edible too.
- **Wild marjoram:** tiny aromatic leaves which are delicious in pasta.
- **Camomile:** pretty daisy-like flowers which make a relaxing tea.

## SUNFLOWERS

A sunflower (Russian mammoth) can grow 3m tall with abundant seeds. Once ripe, the seeds will drop – either collect by covering with a paper bag or leave for the birds to enjoy.



Sunflower  
© Les Binns



Crab apple blossom  
© Jane Taylor

## DWARF TREE FRUIT

Apple trees are generally reliable fruiterers (plant two which pollinate each other or self-fertile varieties). The apple 'Charles Ross' gives abundant, juicy fruit off the tree and 'cookers' later.

# CLIMBING PLANTS

## ROSE

Single, open-head varieties to ensure best nectar source (American pillar). Ramblers tend to grow quickest and 'Kiftsgate' is great to cover a large area.



## IVY

Grows well in shade, best variety for autumn nectar is *Hedera helix*; for extra interest try variegated leaves (*Hedera helix variegata*) and/or grow with honeysuckle.



## JASMINE NUDIFLORUM

Yellow winter flower great for nectar, although slow growing, it is perfect planted with honeysuckle to give year-round flowers.



## HONEYSUCKLE

Great for partial shade, choose traditional varieties for scent and a source of summer nectar (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

# SECURITY PLANTS AND HEDGING

## STINGING NETTLES

Good barrier to restrict access. Also food for butterfly caterpillars (red admiral, small tortoiseshell and peacock), plus can be used to make a nitrogen rich 'tea' to feed plants.



## BLACKTHORN/ HAWTHORN/FIELD ROSE/ BLACKBERRY

Native, thorny, woody hedge species with spring flowers, rose hips or autumn berries. Not evergreen so best to grow with holly for winter colour.



## HOLLY

Woody, prickly leaf, evergreen hedge or shrub. To get winter berries for birds, make sure you plant female and male plants. Or try self-fertile varieties (*Ilex aquifolium J C Van Tol*).

## PYRACANTHA (FIRETHORN)

Evergreen, thorny, woody shrub with autumn berries for birds.



# SENSORY PLANTS



## TOUCH

- **Lamb's ears:** spreading ground cover with soft furry leaves.
- **Pussy willow:** dwarf tree with furry catkins hanging from branches in autumn.
- **Ornamental ferns:** perfect for a damp or shady spot. The leaf underside has spores or 'sporangia' (usually in summer) with various 'raised spotty' surfaces. Avoid bracken.
- **Quince:** hardy shrub, leaves have a downy underside, beautiful scented blossom followed by abundant downy fruit (edible when cooked).
- **Silver sage:** grows in rosettes of silvery-white leaves covered in cottony-like down.
- **Hare's tail grass:** dense swards with velvety, fluffy flower heads.



## SOUND

- **Quaking grass:** nodding lantern shaped flowers which rustle gently in the breeze
- **Fountain grass:** soft spikelets which whisper in the wind
- **Yellow rattle:** seed pods rattle when ripe, also called 'the meadow maker' as it will weaken grasses and enable wildflowers to grow.



## SCENT

- **Lavender:** perfect for a sunny, dry spot; dry flowers for pot pourri and lavender bags.
- **Lemon balm:** produces a pungent, fresh, lemony scent, ideal if you would like to plant something near to facilities like bins!
- **Stocks:** cottage garden favourite (single-head varieties). Tall stems with masses of colourful flowers throughout summer. Easy to grow from seed.
- **Chocolate cosmos:** masses of maroon flowers give off a delightful chocolate/vanilla scent, long flowering period. Easy to grow from seed.

# take ACTION

#WilderDorset

There are lots of ways to encourage wildlife in your garden. Plant flowers to attract pollinators, make a hedgehog doorway in your fence or simply create different habitats such as hedges, flowering trees or long grass. Large or small, your garden will be a stepping stone, helping wildlife to travel from place to place, to breed, feed and shelter.



Make space for nature in your green space and apply for your wildlife-friendly space plaque.

Visit [dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme](http://dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme) to find out how to qualify.

## DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST

Our mission is to create a 'Wilder Dorset' for people and wildlife. With the support of our 27,000 members, Dorset Wildlife Trust manages 42 nature reserves and four visitor centres. We look after Dorset's wildlife and wild places, restore habitats to make space for nature and inspire people to explore, enjoy and value the natural world.

**Join us now to help protect Dorset's wildlife and wild places and make a real difference.**



## Our thanks to The Gardens Group for sponsoring this leaflet



The Gardens Group is made up of three garden centres, each as unique as the plants within them, located

in Sherborne (Castle Gardens), Yeovil (Brimsmore Gardens) and Poundbury (Poundbury Gardens). United by a commitment to green spaces and the wider community, The Gardens Group's team of experts includes indoor and outdoor plant enthusiasts, lepidopterists and wildlife warriors, all ready to inspire, educate and engage with gardeners of all ages and levels of expertise.

The garden centres are also home to three award-winning restaurants and a farm shop, built on people and place, as well as The Gardens Group's hugely popular and multi award-winning Christmas displays.

To find out more, go to [www.thegardensgroup.co.uk](http://www.thegardensgroup.co.uk).



Nature Recovery Dorset is a movement to make more, bigger, better and connected spaces for nature across Dorset. It has been collectively created to allow everyone in the county to join up to help nature recover.

Visit [dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery](http://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery) to find out how to get involved.