



This garden by Mandy Buckland of Greencube Design has a paved terrace in the heart of a meadow, reached by a mown path.



Water is essential to all life, and a pond will attract a wonderful variety of wildlife.

Cheryl Cummings. Instead, nurture an environment for natural pest control: birds and frogs will take care of slugs and snails, while ladybirds and hoverflies love to eat aphids, greenfly and blackfly. 'Removing chemicals from your garden will ensure that our finely tuned eco system will have the opportunity to find its natural equilibrium,' adds Jo Thompson.

### WATER SOURCE

'Ponds are valuable habitats for a multitude of aquatic species, but if your garden doesn't have space for a pond, a bird bath is a good alternative – just make sure it's full and the water is clean,' explains Jo.

For best results, position a reasonably sized pond in a sunny location, away from overhanging trees. Plant around at least two thirds of its perimeter to enhance its wildlife value, and add pond plants to oxygenate the water. 'Birds will come to drink and bathe right through the year, in spring the frogs will lay eggs, while in summer you might see swimming newts, or damselflies and dragonflies zooming over the water,' says Cheryl Cummings.

### PERFECT HABITATS

All wildlife needs a place to shelter. 'Long grasses and native hedges can provide important habitats,' explains John Wyer. Ecology can also be improved with bird and bat boxes. 'Incorporate a bug hotel for overwintering pollinators, which can become a focal point in itself,' suggests garden designer Mandy Buckland of Greencube Design. Log or stone piles can easily become bug homes, or 'you can get creative about how you reuse other natural materials to create dry spaces for animals and other wildlife,' suggests Jo Thompson.

### EASY MAINTENANCE

'Instead of zealously deadheading border plants in autumn, wait until spring for your clear-up, with the obvious exception of those plants that are likely to self seed and become a nuisance,' advises

horticulturalist Mick Lavelle. Leaving seed heads on plants provides food for birds and insects during the leaner months. You can also allow nettles, one of the best sources of food for caterpillars and some butterfly species, to grow in unseen areas. 'And leave the lawn to grow; allow its weeds to flower and insects will feast on the banquet. The bigger the diversity of flowering plants, the greater the number of insects will benefit and the more birds will come in to eat them,' adds Cheryl Cummings.

### NECTAR-RICH FLOWERS

Plants are the single most important factor when it comes to attracting wildlife into a garden. 'As a general rule, the best plants for pollinators are single-flowering, open varieties, and not highly bred cultivars,' explains Mick Lavelle. Plant an array that provides a good source of food and shelter over as long a season as possible. There are some great self-seeders that are excellent bee and butterfly magnets, such as foxgloves and *Cephalaria gigantea* (scabious). Purple is a favourite colour of pollinators, so add allium, salvia and perovskia,' suggests Mandy Buckland.

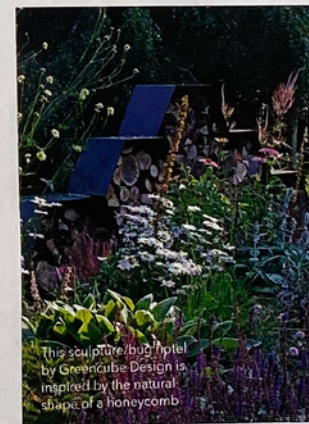
### WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

Preparation is key for a wildflower meadow, explains Rob Jones, director of The Garden Design Company. 'You need to consider whether it will be annual or perennial, and different wildflower mixes will suit different soil conditions and aspects. These meadows are best sown in the autumn, or early spring as a second best,' he advises. 'You cannot sow straight into grass, as it is too vigorous. At the very least, the grass needs to be opened up by 50% to allow for germination,' he adds. 'Meadows must be cut in the autumn and all the clippings removed to avoid the nutrient level increasing, although leave the clippings for two weeks at first to allow the seeds to set for next year.'

FEATURE: RACHEL CLOW. PHOTOGRAPHS: CHERYL CUMMINGS, GARDEN DESIGN, GREENCUBE DESIGN, THE GARDEN DESIGN COMPANY/MARK LORD, BOWLES & WYER



'Cut paths through the meadow and add places to sit and take in the sights and sounds,' says Rob Jones, The Garden Design Company.



This sculpture/bug hotel by Greencube Design is inspired by the natural shape of a honeycomb.



The Springwatch Garden by Jo Thompson shows that re-wilding can have a big impact.