

Discover and take action for local wildlife

How to help put the wild back into your garden



Saving **Norfolk's Wildlife** for the Future

Thank you for being a member!

We can't invite you out and about yet to our events and activities so in the meantime, this leaflet has been produced to help you stay connected to the wildlife on your doorstep.

Nothing here is time sensitive so please use it to enjoy Norfolk's nature when and where you can.

Keep up to date with what is happening at Norfolk Wildlife Trust online.
Facebook: /NorfolkWildlifeTrust
Twitter: NorfolkWT
Instagram: NorfolkWT

If you have not done so already sign up to our monthly member's e-newsletter: email membership@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Wildlife gardening	Page 4
Garden birds	Page 6
Butterflies, moths and bees	Page 8
Mammals	Page 10
Amphibians and reptiles	Page 12
Plants	Page 14

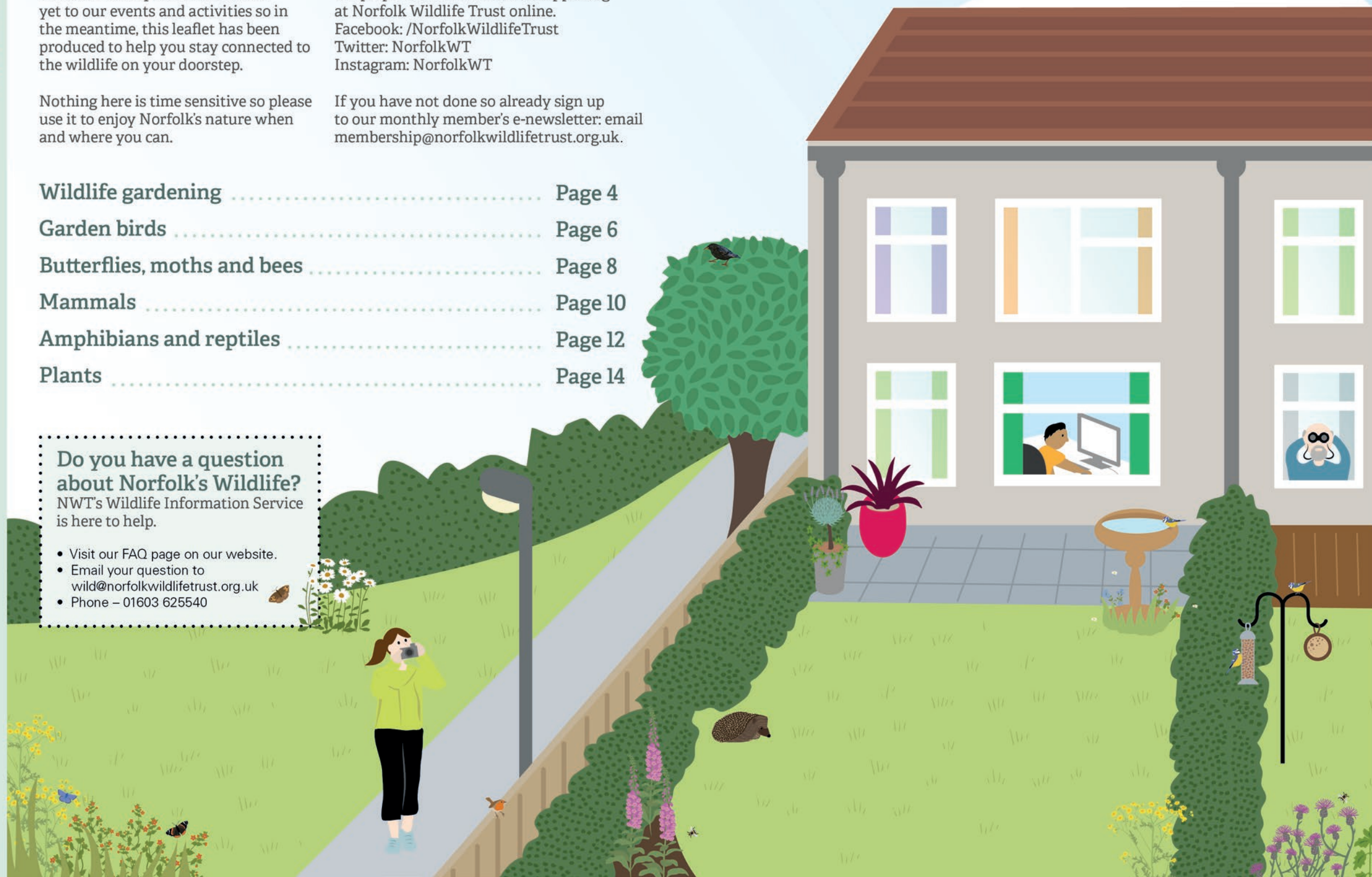
Do you have a question about Norfolk's Wildlife?

NWT's Wildlife Information Service is here to help.

- Visit our FAQ page on our website.
- Email your question to wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk
- Phone – 01603 625540

Share your wildlife images on NWT's photo gallery:

To submit an image visit:
www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/gallery



Gardening for wildlife

Wildlife-friendly gardening is about making a haven for you, as well as for wildlife.

Up to a quarter of a city's area can be made up of gardens. Although each garden on its own may be small, together they form a patchwork linking urban green spaces with nature reserves and the wider countryside.

With an estimated 24 million gardens in the UK, the way they are managed can make a big difference for wildlife. Hedgehogs, sparrows, song thrushes and stag beetles are all declining species in the UK. If we manage our gardens for wildlife, these creatures and many more will feel the benefits.

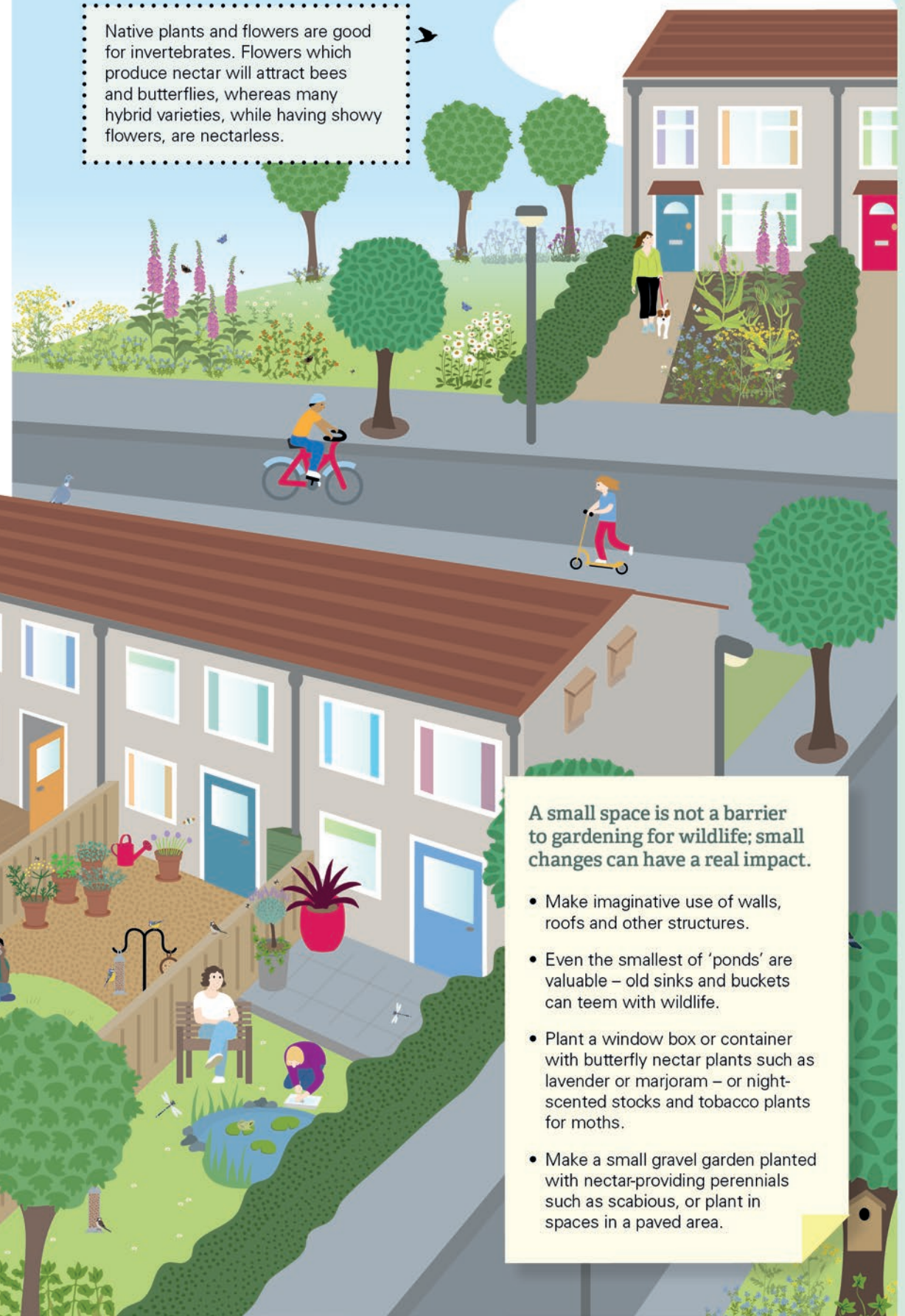
You don't need to travel far to see amazing wildlife. Gardens, parks, verges and paths all contain something of interest.

By gardening for wildlife, you'll be rewarded by a truly natural outdoor space, where you can enjoy the plants, animals and birds that make their home there.

The essentials of successful wildlife gardening are based on four things: trees, deadwood, water and variety of planting. Any of these features will encourage wildlife to your garden.

In general, gardens which are not too tidy are better for wildlife and many species will benefit if you can leave a nettle or bramble patch or simply allow rough grass to grow alongside a hedge.

Native plants and flowers are good for invertebrates. Flowers which produce nectar will attract bees and butterflies, whereas many hybrid varieties, while having showy flowers, are nectarless.



A pile of logs in a shady corner will feed beetle larvae and shelter animals such as frogs, toads and slow worms. Hedgehogs often hibernate in wood piles. If you're having a bonfire check for sleeping hedgehogs first.

Wildlife needs breeding habitat, shelter, food and water – for example providing nest boxes, feeders and water for drinking and bathing will ensure your garden becomes a mini nature-reserve for birds.

A small space is not a barrier to gardening for wildlife; small changes can have a real impact.

- Make imaginative use of walls, roofs and other structures.
- Even the smallest of 'ponds' are valuable – old sinks and buckets can teem with wildlife.
- Plant a window box or container with butterfly nectar plants such as lavender or marjoram – or night-scented stocks and tobacco plants for moths.
- Make a small gravel garden planted with nectar-providing perennials such as scabious, or plant in spaces in a paved area.

Garden birds

Whether you have a small, city patch or acres of fields, you can encourage birds to visit your garden.

Why are gardens important for birds?

Over recent years, numbers of our once-common birds have dropped dramatically in the wake of increased development, intensification of farming, and habitat loss. For example, house sparrows have decreased by a massive 71%. But garden birds do have a lifeline.

Together, the 16 million gardens across the UK form an area for wildlife larger than all our National Nature Reserves. This patchwork of habitats helps our wildlife to move about freely, forming a vast living landscape that links urban green spaces with the wider countryside. Encouraging birds to visit your garden is easy and a great way to help!

Provide places for birds to nest and rest safely by planting native trees and shrubs, or putting up nest boxes.

Put out suitable food on a bird table and in feeders – even one that sticks to a window will do the trick!

The amount of food you need to supply will vary depending on the season and weather; try to put out only what will get eaten, so there's nothing left to go off.

Birds eat different things: try seeds for sparrows and finches, fat balls for tits, and fruit and worms for thrushes and robins. As long as it's not mouldy, you can also pop out leftovers like fruit cake, unsalted nuts, and over-ripe apples and pears.

Identifying birds by their songs and calls is a great skill to have and adds a whole new dimension to being outdoors.

Visit www.british-birdsongs.uk to hear the songs of common garden birds.

Don't forget to provide fresh water (a saucer or even a bin lid will do) as well, and make sure you clean feeders and tables regularly to avoid disease.



Which birds am I likely to see in my garden?



Starling

Adults (pictured) are oily-black with a purple-and-green sheen, and tiny, beige spots in winter. Juveniles are dark grey-brown.



House sparrow

Males (pictured) are streaky brown above and grey below, with chestnut-and-white wings, a black bib and a grey cap. Females and juveniles are duller.



Long-tailed tit

Black, white and pink above, and pale pink below, with a long, black-and-white tail, a white head, and a broad, black stripe above the eye.



Blue tit

Greeny-blue above and yellow below, with a blue cap, white cheeks, black eyestripes, and a blue tail and wings.



Woodpigeon

Grey above, with a pink breast, white neck patch and white patches on the wings.



Chaffinch

Males (pictured) have blue-grey crowns, brown backs and pink breasts. Females are brown, with white shoulder patches and wingbars.



Goldfinch

Gingery-brown above and pale below, with black-and-yellow wings, a black crown, white cheeks and a red face.



Blackbird

Males (pictured) are black with a yellow bill and yellow ring around the eye. Females and juveniles are dark brown.



Robin

Brown above, with a white belly and red breast. Juveniles are mottled gold and brown.

Butterflies, moths and bees

Many pollinators are facing threats. Insensitive land use, including fragmentation and loss of habitat, less diversity of plants and the use of insecticides and herbicides have all been linked to declining numbers.

By taking small actions, your garden can serve as a fantastic habitat for a wide range of species throughout the year.

Many flowers provide both pollen and nectar so will attract a range of visitors, and sometimes the clue is in the shape. Sunflowers, asters and many other flowers of the daisy family help to attract butterflies and bees with their flat, open tops, perfect for landing.

Other flowers in the campion and honeysuckle families have narrow tubular centres, which moths and butterflies may have exclusive access to with their long tongues. Brush-like flowers, like buddleia, also make for good resting places and nectar access.

An ideal butterfly garden would include a wide range of flower shapes, full of seasonal perennials that offer nectar for early arrivals such as brimstones, through to the last red admirals in autumn.

It's also important to think about caterpillars – even if you spot a few holes in your plants remember, the more caterpillars you can support, the more butterflies and moths there will be!

Beautiful butterflies



Orange tip



Green-veined white



Red admiral



Common blue



Peacock



Small tortoiseshell



There are 24 species of bumblebee, 59 species of butterfly and more than 2,500 moths in Britain.

Marvellous moths



Garden tiger



Hummingbird hawk-moth



Silver Y



Elephant hawk-moth



Spectacle



Brimstone

Why not have a go at making a simple solitary bee home? For more information visit: www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-make-bee-hotel

Did you know that bees provide us with every third mouthful of food we eat?

Without bees, we would be unable to grow lots of our favourite foods, including tomatoes, blueberries, strawberries and green beans.

Set up a moth trap to see who visits your garden at night. All you need is a white sheet and a torch. Peg the sheet on your washing line, turn off nearby lights, switch on your torch, and wait patiently to see who flutters in.



Mammals

Mammals are well represented in Norfolk and it may surprise you to know that there are more than thirty species of terrestrial mammal present in and around the county.

Why not start recording mammals found on your local patch? Your powers of observation will be put to the test and your appreciation of the environment greatly enhanced.

Use your senses

Developing the skills to get close to wild mammals is challenging but rewarding:

- Many mammals have a highly developed sense of smell – approach where possible from down wind so that your scent is masked.
- Use your ears – many mammals have distinctive calls at certain times of the year (for example, rutting deer in the autumn).

- Patience – a key skill is sitting, waiting and watching. If you remain motionless, animals will accept you as part of the scenery and resume their normal activity.

Trails

If mammals are using your garden they may create clear access points leading to and from favoured feeding areas. Holes made under fences, fur snagged on wire fences, food dropped along the pathway and scratch marks on trees will all give clues as to what is present.

When you are low down in the food chain being able to hide is extremely important. Hedges provide a suitable place to build a nest. Allow long grass to grow at the base to provide a corridor along which small mammals can travel safely.

Create a hideaway for a hedgehog. This doesn't need to be an expensive wooden box – a good pile of leaves under a hedge or a log pile with a sheltered cavity are especially good.

Areas of long tussocky grass, especially alongside ditches or hedges, make brilliant foraging and breeding sites for mice and voles.

Which small mammals might I see in my garden?



Weasel

Long, thin animals with a ginger-brown body and white belly.



Wood mouse

Wood mice have pointed noses, large ears and long, hairless tails.



Common shrew

Common shrews have long pointed noses and eat worms, snails and slugs.



Bank vole

Bank voles have blunt noses and short tails.



Grey squirrel

Agile animals with long fluffy tails used for balance.



Hedgehog

Adults have up to 7,000 spines and a small, hidden tail.

Tracks

Any mammals using your garden will leave tracks, although these may be hard to spot. If you place some sand (perhaps in a large tray or container) in a shallow pit close to suspected feeding sites or across established trails, any mammals using the area may leave their tracks which you can then identify by use of a good field guide.



Amphibians and reptiles

Amphibians and reptiles are enigmatic groups of animals. Due to their secretive nature, they can be hard to spot.

There are four species of native reptile and seven species of native amphibian resident in Norfolk. Some of these are widespread but others such as the natterjack toad and palmate newt are much less common and are known to inhabit just a few sites.

Amphibians in my garden

With the loss of many ponds in the wider countryside, gardens have become an increasingly important refuge for amphibians. If you have a pond or plenty of natural cover you are quite likely to have frogs, toads and newts visiting from time to time, and maybe breeding – even if you live in the middle of a town or city.

If you are looking for amphibians in your garden, you should look in ponds and in damp areas – such as under log piles, accumulated leaf litter or long grass – throughout the spring and summer months. Newts and young frogs and toads can sometimes be found in holes in walls and rockeries, or under paving slabs and plant pots.

Even if you do not have much space, you can still make a small water feature that will attract amphibians. Even 'ponds' made from plastic bowls or waterproofed half-barrels sunk into the ground and stocked with a few native water plants will provide a cooling-off place for frogs and toads. Make sure the animals can easily get in and out of your pond.

Amphibians are very useful creatures to have in the garden and will feast merrily on slugs and snails, helping to keep your garden in balance and allowing your fruit and vegetables to prosper!

What is the difference between a common frog and common toad?

Common frog	Common toad
moist smooth skin, variable in colour with a distinct brown patch behind each eye	less variable in colour, usually mottled mid-brown granular or warty appearance
pointed nose	blunt nose giving a more rounded profile
common frogs leap	common toads waddle or crawl
tadpoles are mottled brownish-grey to olive	tadpoles remain jet black
during breeding season, common frogs make a quiet low-pitched call and inhabit ponds with shallow edges	during breeding season, common toads make a louder higher croak and favour deeper water



Common frog



Common toad



Slow worm



Adder



Grass snake



Common lizard

Reptiles in Norfolk

Four of the six UK reptiles occur in Norfolk with the exceptions being the smooth snake and the sand lizard which are largely confined to the heathlands of southern Britain. The reptiles you can see are:

Slow worm

They occupy a variety of habitats but prefer grassy meadows, woodland margins and open fields. They can also sometimes be found in gardens.

Adder

They can be found on heathland, dune systems or woodland glades especially during early spring after hibernation and when engaged in courtship.

Common lizard

They are best looked for on sunny days basking on fenceposts and other exposed objects.

Grass snake

They are quite common, especially on or near wetlands where they will hunt for frogs, newts and other such prey. The best time to see them is on warm early spring days.

Plants

Plants are all around us and are an integral part of our lives; they fill our fields and hedgerows with greenery, our woodlands and verges with bright colour and the air with their fragrance.

Norfolk has more than 1,000 species of wild flowering plants; these include grasses, sedges and rushes as well as trees and shrubs, which are simply large flowering plants. In addition there are many species of non-flowering plants, ranging from tiny mosses and liverworts to the larger more obvious ferns.

Learning to identify wildflowers can bring a whole new dimension to a walk, suddenly you begin looking down,

walking slower as you take in the array of different species at your feet, whether that be in the countryside or an urban area.

Gardening can also take on a new meaning. Weeding suddenly becomes more difficult, as you put a name to a plant and your conscience is pricked when you go to pull it out. What do they say about weeds? 'A weed is just a flower growing in the wrong place'.

Identifying plant families

One way to start to get to grips with identifying wildflowers is to begin to learn the family it belongs to. Learn the key characteristics for a plant in the buttercup family or bedstraw family, then you know where to look in your plant book. Here are five families to start with:

Buttercup (*Ranunculaceae*)
Varied family – not all species resemble buttercups. Alternate leaves, flowers usually have five petals and five sepals.



Geranium (*Geraniaceae*)
Leaves usually alternate, flowers have five petals and five sepals.



Pea (*Fabaceae*)
Distinctive flower structure – wide standard petal at top, two narrower 'wings' at side and the two lowest petals fused to form a boat-shaped 'keel'.



Daisy (*Asteraceae*)
Many species in this family produce feathered seeds (think of dandelion clocks) where the whole seed head forms a rounded 'clock' and seeds disperse on the wind.



Bedstraw (*Rubiaceae*)
Square stems, narrow leaves often end in a small point. Flowers small, in clusters.



Which plants might I find growing in my lawn?



Daisy



Dandelion



Common storksbill



Yarrow



Ribwort plantain



Creeping buttercup

Get up close and personal to your lawn, and get to know some of the 'wildflower residents' that grow there.

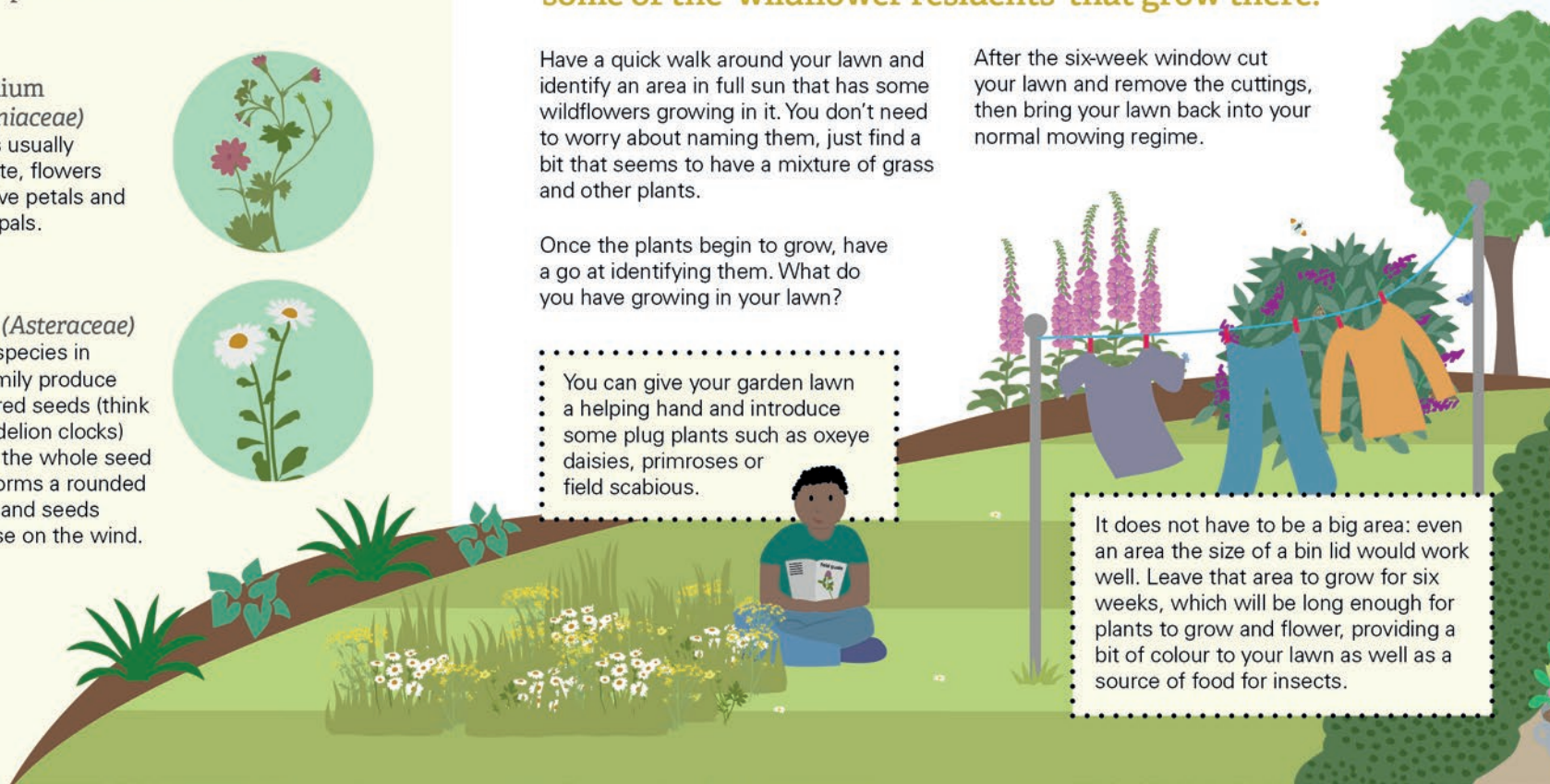
Have a quick walk around your lawn and identify an area in full sun that has some wildflowers growing in it. You don't need to worry about naming them, just find a bit that seems to have a mixture of grass and other plants.

After the six-week window cut your lawn and remove the cuttings, then bring your lawn back into your normal mowing regime.

Once the plants begin to grow, have a go at identifying them. What do you have growing in your lawn?

You can give your garden lawn a helping hand and introduce some plug plants such as oxeye daisies, primroses or field scabious.

It does not have to be a big area: even an area the size of a bin lid would work well. Leave that area to grow for six weeks, which will be long enough for plants to grow and flower, providing a bit of colour to your lawn as well as a source of food for insects.



Inspired to take action to help your local wildlife?

Make the Norfolk Wildlife Trust website your first stop for further information. www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk then add:

for wildlife gardening: **/athome**

to volunteer for Norfolk Wildlife Trust: **/volunteer**

to join us at an NWT event: **/events**

to share your wildlife sightings: **/spotter**



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