

# *Walton Churches Creation Care Project*

## **Summer 2023 - Gardening Special**

After a long cold winter and spring, many of us are keen to get back into the garden. Even in a city like Milton Keynes, with so many green spaces, gardens are a really valuable resource for the environment and for nature. Small changes can make a big difference to how hospitable our gardens are to wildlife and how much we contribute to the local environment.

### **Ponds**

Even a small bucket pond is enormously valuable to wildlife. If you can't manage a pond, try to put water out for birds and small mammals. A small bowl with water and gravel means even insects can have a drink safely.



### **Water**

If you can, have a water butt. Even if it only collects water from a small area of roof like a garage or a shed, you will be surprised how much is there. Using it for the garden saves you money and wildlife will appreciate the unchlorinated taste.

### **Lawns**

A well-tended weedless lawn is not only less ecologically useful, it is also very vulnerable to heat and drought, as we saw last summer. Allowing low-growing weeds like daisies keeps it much greener through the hot dry months.

Better still, can you leave part of it unmown?

Either leave a small area or think about mowing paths through the lawn area rather than the whole space. **No Mow May** is popular now as a way of allowing wild flowers to flourish and the organisation supporting it suggests only mowing around once every four weeks after that.

But any lawn is better than bare earth, which not only affects the quality of the soil, it also raises the temperature of the ground by several degrees. If you're looking at the very high April temperatures in Spain and thinking about possible heatwaves, plants of all sizes help to reduce the temperature around your house.





## Pollinators and perennials

Try to plant flowers which attract and reward pollinating insects. Don't pull up your first dandelions, as they provide ideal food for bees at an early stage in the spring and give both pollen and nectar.

Bees and other insects are attracted to the tiny flowers on some herbs like oregano or thyme.

Can you build a bug hotel? It does not need to be made of expensive materials – recycle!

Aim to use more perennials which come back each year, rather than annuals. This will also save you money and effort!



## Recycling

Good news! Some garden centres will now recycle compost bags as well as plastic plant pots.



*Thank you for reading this.*

*Please send us your tips and ideas for our next newsletter:*

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**The WCCCP Team**

## Things to avoid

- If possible, avoid **using chemicals** in your garden. Encourage natural predators for pests and plant to suit your soil and garden situation. Slug pellets kill hedgehogs.
- **Leaf-blowers** are very bad for the environment. Try using a rake instead.
- Don't use **peat-based compost**. Our peat bogs store a great deal of carbon, which is released when the peat is disturbed, and are a valuable but endangered habitat.
- Try not to **let your cat out at dusk or dawn**, or get a brightly coloured collar or bell for it. Cats catch up to 100 million items of prey each year in the spring and summer, including not just birds but many small mammals. Playing hunting games with your cat for just 15 minutes indoors can help to satisfy its predatory instincts and save wildlife.