

AUTUMN ECOCHURCH NEWSLETTER

Not many weeks ago, our gardens were ablaze with colour as our many flowers donned their exquisite finery in their bid to attract pollinators. But now, with the onset of colder weather, our many garden residents both plant and animal, are entering a period of rest and our birds are left to face the challenges of shorter and colder days.

For us, it is a time when we need to anticipate the needs of our fellow creatures and take actions to ensure their survival. Listed below are some of the tasks we can turn our attention to.

Hygiene and provision of food for birds

Assess and repair if necessary your bird feeders which tend to deteriorate over time. Clean with mild disinfectant solution, and ensure they are rinsed well. The feeders will be much used over the next few months. Stock with fat balls, fat blocks, fat pellets, mealworms, peanuts, cheese, bacon bits, peanuts in feeders, niger seed for finches and siskins, and good quality seed mixes including black sunflower seeds. Leave flower heads standing, Birds feed on them.

Don't prune berry or fruit-bearing bushes or trees at this time of the year

Provide homes for wildlife

Collect leaves. It takes two years for them to rot down. Not only can leaves be used as seed compost or mulch, but they also provide shelter for frogs and insects and create a hunting ground for birds.

Allow leaves and twigs to build up under hedges as these can provide accommodation for hedgehogs and dormice.

Make or buy a bug hotel or simply drill some holes in a piece of trunk.

Try not to be influenced by tidiness. Don't cut ivy and hedges until March, both give winter shelter to insects.

Hollow stems give winter protection to various insects including ladybirds. Collect a bundle of old flower stems and leave them in the garden, tits will winkle out some insects.

Create a log-pile which will harbour insects.

Provide water

Keep water available throughout the year. Droughts are likely in summer making water scarce, but equally in winter, below zero temperatures can make water unavailable.

Birdboxes

Clean out bird-boxes and consider installing new ones. Some birds will take shelter in boxes on colder nights.

Undertake a project

Create a bog or a pond. Make or buy a compost bin. Make or buy a bird box.

I (John) created a bog garden about a year ago. I used a small preformed pond that someone had discarded and left on their drive for the Council to dispose of. (Do keep a look out for people's discarded items, you never know what you will find!) I now have some fine moisture loving wild plants growing in my bog garden:-

Marsh-marigold (*Caltha pallustris*). Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and Cuckoo-flower (*Cardamine pratensis*).

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-make-bog-garden>

You can make a small bog garden using a discarded bowl or bucket or even use a car tyre. Please see the youtube presentation:-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A133OtCCae4>

The Wildlife trusts give concise step by step instructions on how to build ponds ranging from large to mini.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-pond>