

White Colne Environmental Accreditation Scheme

How the scheme works

Residents of White Colne take part in various activities to cumulatively enhance the biodiversity within the village and increase the area of land dedicated to wildlife, simply by donating a proportion of their gardens and outdoor spaces to wildlife and creating areas and conditions suitable for nature to thrive.

This can be achieved by wilding areas within private gardens, as well as using patios, courtyards and balconies to provide habitats, however small, to attract native insects, birds and mammals.

The Parish Council has devised a scheme that awards points for each project undertaken by individual households. The points are added together and contribute to an award: 3 points for a bronze award, 6 for a silver and 10 for a gold. Award winners will be given a small plaque which they can affix to their property, or property entrance, indicating that they have taken part in the scheme. We may even arrange a small award ceremony up on our village Meadows.

Monitoring the scheme

We just ask participants to submit 'before' and 'after' photographs of their individual projects in order to apply for points.

We actively encourage children to take part.

Ideas for projects to create habitats (one point for each)

1. Take part in '**No mow May**' and refrain from cutting lawns throughout May and even into June to create a small flower meadow which allows the wildflowers to flourish. This will bring in bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. We would suggest an area of at least 4 square metres if you have the space. We will accept smaller areas where space is not available.
2. For residents without gardens, why not **sow wildflower seed mix** in troughs and pots on a balcony, courtyard or patio.
3. Creation of a **wildlife pond**. This needn't be large. Even a bowl or a half barrel regularly filled with water will provide a drinking station for birds. Larger ponds create the conditions sought by creatures such as frogs and dragonflies to reproduce. You will get pond skaters in no time and the birds will come to drink. Remember to make the sides sloping and leave shallow areas and landing stages for creatures to use, so they are not at risk of drowning. <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/seven-ways-to-create-a-wildlife-friendly-garden.html>
4. Make and put up a **bug hotel**. They can be made easily from unwanted and recycled materials. Hollow sticks such as bamboo are much liked by flying insects. Look for sticks that are sealed at the end. They indicate that you have creatures in residence. You can put a hotel on the side of a building if you don't have a garden. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-minibeast-hotel/>
5. Put up **bird nesting boxes**. You could make your own or buy from shops/online. The RSPB website is a reliable source of good products. <https://shopping.rspb.org.uk/>
6. Put up a **swift nesting box**. There is a marked decline in swift numbers and they desperately need more nesting sites. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/create-a-high-home-for-swifts/>

7. Put up an **owl box**. They are big so you will need a fairly large garden and mount it quite high in a tree or on the side of a building. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/nestboxes-for-owls-and-kestrels/>
8. Put up **bat boxes** but please bear in mind that you may not inspect the box or open it without a licence. <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes>
9. Install a **bird feeding station**. Just one or two feeders containing seed will soon attract the birds. You can make your own from a drinks bottle <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/seven-ways-to-create-a-wildlife-friendly-garden.html> If you also provide fat balls and specialist seed such as black niger, you will attract a greater number of species.
There are feeders that can be placed on windows by suction pads if you don't have a garden. You will become mesmerised by the birds coming to feed so close to you.
10. Introduce a **bird bath** but make sure to clean it regularly and top it up daily.
11. Provide a **hedgehog shelter**. Either buy one or better still, make one.
<https://www.essexwt.org.uk/blog/bailey-tait/homemade-hedgehog-hideaways>
<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/seven-ways-to-create-a-wildlife-friendly-garden.html>
12. Create a **hedgehog highway** i.e. a hole in the bottom of your fence so hedgehogs can travel from one garden to another. They cover 2km on average in just one night. Then you can add your highway to the map at www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-neighbours
13. Create a **log, dead wood and leaf litter pile** which will rot and attract insects, particularly beetles. These are good for your soil and make good eating for mammals and birds. Your log pile may also be used by toads, hedgehogs and slow worms.
14. Plant a **new hedge** containing native species. This can provide good cover for birds and even nesting sites. So much more nature-friendly and interesting than a fence.
15. Plant one or more **new native trees** that attract wildlife – fruit and berry-bearing trees and bushes including hawthorn, rowan, birch, alder and pyracantha. Trees suitable for growing in pots can be placed on patios and in courtyards.
16. Leave an area of **nettles, brambles and ivy** somewhere in your garden, perhaps behind a shed or at the far end of your plot. You may consider it untidy but butterflies, bees and other little creatures will see it as paradise for feeding and egg-laying.

Please bear in mind:

In this area, squirrels will soon learn how to steal seed and nuts, so you may need a squirrel-proof bird feeder if you don't intend to satisfy the nutritional needs of the entire local squirrel population!

If rats and other vermin are a problem, you can get 'no mess' bird food which ensures that less food will drop to the ground and attract unwanted guests.

When installing swift boxes, bat boxes and owl boxes, they need to be placed high up in the eaves of a building or in trees, so please take common-sense precautions when climbing ladders.

When gardening on balconies, please consider the weight of pots and planters. You may need to seek advice about the maximum weight that can be supported safely.

