

## The Wildlife Gardener's Almanac

A seasonal guide to increasing the biodiversity in your garden

Jackie Bennett

<b>Publication</b>	31st March 2023
<b>Price</b>	£14.99
<b>ISBN</b>	9781446309537
<b>Format</b>	Paperback 244 x 170 mm
<b>Extent</b>	144 pages
<b>Illustrations</b>	Black & white illustrations
<b>Publisher</b>	<b>David &amp; Charles</b>
<b>Classification</b>	Gardening & cookery
<b>BIC CODE/S</b>	WMQN
<b>THEMA CODE/S</b>	WMQN
<b>SALES REGIONS</b>	Craft Trade Only



### Key Selling Points

- Draws on the Almanac publishing phenomenon, with a highly topical and practical guide to caring for and encouraging the wildlife in your garden
- A completely reimagined and updated edition of this gardening classic, with new illustrations to appeal to the modern audience
- Includes guidance on the wildlife to be expected each month, a checklist of the main tasks and instructions on how to carry them out, profiles of plants that are useful to wildlife, and a practical project each month to increase the range of habitats available in your garden.

### Description

**The ultimate guide to encouraging wildlife into the garden all year round.**

Taking a month-by-month approach, *The Wildlife Gardener's Almanac* is packed with ideas, advice, tips and checklists, to give gardener's the best chance to make their contribution to conserving our native flora and fauna, no matter what size their garden.

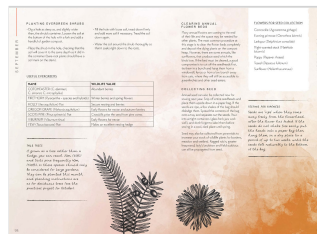
Each chapter of this beautifully illustrated book presents an introduction to the wild plants and creatures to expect at that time of the year, lists of seasonal tasks with straightforward instructions on how to carry them out, detailed profiles of plants in bloom, and a practical project aimed at encouraging more wildlife into the garden, including making a wildlife pond, building a nest box, planning a herb bed, planting a wildflower meadow and more.

With appendices covering wildlife gardening in containers and suggested garden layouts, this guide offers a wealth of gardening information in an accessible format, allowing gardeners to find the advice they need, exactly when they need it.

### About the Author

Jackie Bennett writes about gardens, wildlife and natural history. Her books include *Wild About the Garden* (1998, Channel 4), *The Writer's Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 2014) and *Shakespeare's Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 2016) which was a finalist for the Garden Media Guild's Inspirational Book of the Year. Jackie appears at the Cheltenham Literary Festival, Write on Kew, Niddfest (Yorkshire), Wigtown Book Festival (Scotland) and the Charroux Literary Festival (France) and has contributed to various radio programmes and to BBC television's *Countryfile*.

### Example spreads from the book



# About the Author

Jackie Bennett writes about gardens, wildlife and natural history. Her books include *Wild About the Garden* (1998, Channel 4), *The Writer's Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 2014) and *Shakespeare's Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 2016) which was a finalist for the Garden Media Guild's Inspirational Book of the Year. Jackie appears at the Cheltenham Literary Festival, Write on Kew, Niddfest (Yorkshire), Wigtown Book Festival (Scotland) and the Charroux Literary Festival (France) and has contributed to various radio programmes and to BBC television's *Countryfile*.

# Example spreads from the book



## JANUARY

One of the best things about a wildlife garden is that winter is a season to be welcomed rather than dreaded. Unlike a conventional garden, where a small selection of carefully chosen shrubs provides artificial winter colour, the wildlife garden is open to its own seasonal plants, birds and animals. Gardeners tend to dislike this time of year, yet this feeling that everything is 'locked' is part of its charm. If a layer of snow falls, there is little to beat the absolute stillness of a winter day. Of course, this is a deceptive and lastingly as long as it takes for the first hawk marks to appear in the virgin snow. Just beneath the surface, the garden is teeming with life.

Keeping an eye on the bird table from the warmth of the kitchen or living room is one of the month's chief pleasures. A great cross-section of birds should show up, including all the regulars like blackbirds, thrushes, jays and robins. There may also be flocks of migrant fieldfares, redwing or siskin seeking shelter in bushes from the cutting winds of the open fields.

When the temperature does allow frost-freeing and the sun emerges temporarily to warm the earth, restores the hedgerows, which are normally bare, and the first snow under a pile of leaves at the bottom of the hedge for a short food source. From other sources in gardens during a hard winter, long for slug and beetles. They are not aware of turning over a new leaf but will be in the garden.

As for plants, the snowdrops have become something of a cliché for the winter. The flowers in perfect, just as we have given up hope of seeing a living plant, it emerges through the melting snow a constant reminder that this is anything but the dead of winter.

### TASKS FOR THE MONTH

- Feed a wildlife notebook
- Start birds consistently
- Keep ponds free of ice
- Draw up plans for a wildlife garden
- Order wildflower seeds

### STARTING A WILDLIFE NOTEBOOK

As the start of the year, make a resolution to record the activity in your garden for one whole winter month. Use a hardback notebook or desk diary and keep it somewhere near at hand so you can make notes when you come in from the garden. Every evening is worth recording, but the majority of the first month to the last July, many disappearing on the back of a visiting bird.

Keeping a notebook is not just a pleasant exercise, it also helps you to plan next year's garden and monitor changes in the frequency and behaviour of local wildlife. It doesn't need to be elaborate or theory-intensive, just the date and a few notes will do. As the garden develops and the range of species increases, it will become a diary record not only for your own use, but perhaps for other visitors to your house and garden.

### LOOKING AFTER THE BIRDS

This is probably the month during which garden birds benefit most from a little human intervention. Natural food sources like wildflower seeds and berries have been used up by the population of local birds, in competition with visitors from the fields and woods and water sources are not over. It is therefore vital to feed birds regularly, putting out food every day. Early morning is the best time, but if you cannot put a feeder out in the early afternoon, fresh water is important too, even if you have a pond - many birds will drink from the bird table and wash their feathers in the pond.

Put out a range of food, on the ground and on the table, including the specialist seed for December for visitors on choosing a bird table, include hanging feeders such as the spruce and nut varieties like siskin, titmouse and goldfinch. Use the table for other visitors such as squirrels, foxes and badgers, nuts and fat on the table for other visitors such as squirrels, foxes and badgers. They will come to rely on this food supply so you may begin to 'train' them to visit the feeder at a certain time.



## APRIL

This is the month of showers and sun, of unpredictable weather and bursts of new growth. Deciduous shrubs, which it seemed would never be green, are covered in new shoots, once again. Bulbs, planted in hope last autumn, emerge right on cue, triggered by their stable rootstock mechanism (local underground). Frosts and unexpected snow flurries may interrupt the march of spring, but any setbacks are only temporary. The ground of new life can only be slowed down, never stopped altogether.

The breeding season for garden birds is in full swing and every available nest box, hedge and dense shrub will be occupied. In ideal conditions, most birds would prefer to site their nest a respectful distance from their neighbours, but in urban areas, where suitable sites are precious, it is quite possible to see birds of different species nesting in close proximity. This is also the time that summer migrants return from the distant continent to breed, some in huge numbers like the willow warblers, housemartins, swifts and swallows. Other visitors are less common, such as the great flycatcher which settles in cold, deciduous woods only in western Britain. There will also be a first brood of nestlings, from the first bird taken from the wild honeycreeper, which makes up the shrubby underlayer of these woods.

Some of the mammals born underground last month will now have their eyes open and be ready to leave the nest. Their undernourished parent of the garden is quite possible to find in the woods, shrubs or fields under a pile of logs or a pile of coniferous trees. When they do venture out, they will be easy prey for larger birds like kestrels, fox and badger. A cub may emerge on warm evenings later in the month, although the parents will try to keep them underground for as long as they can contain the cub's natural curiosity and instinct for exploration.

### TASKS FOR THE MONTH

- Put away the bird table
- Sow early annual seeds outdoors
- Plant out of new flowering meadows
- Plant pond and wetland plants
- Plant climbers and put up trellis

### BIRD TABLE STORAGE

The bird table can be put away now and stored for next winter. Wash down the surface with a mild disinfectant to remove any traces of food and droppings.

### SOW HARDY ANNUAL SEEDS

As the weather improves, many annual garden and wildflowers can be sown from seed outdoors. This is one of the cheapest and easiest ways to provide flowering nectar plants for the garden insects and is ideal for anyone wanting a garden from scratch. If you are sowing seeds in trays, the seeds can be sown in trays and then moved to the garden when they are ready to grow. Do not use a seed tray in the garden as it will be a constant reminder that this is anything but the dead of winter.

### CUTTING THE NEW FLOWERING MEADOW

New meadows sown or mowed, over the previous autumn, should have their first cut when the grass reaches a height of 10cm (4in) (see the next page for September). This is only applicable to swards sown with a standard grass and general lower meadow and not those containing annual flowers which are cut in late summer.

Before mowing, cut the grass lightly to make the seedlings as securely bedded in the soil. Use heavy-duty lawn mowers or motor mowers, and cut at a height of 5-8cm (2-3in). These meadows can be mowed by the dry from local rootline shears. A heavy hand will also cut the grass effectively, but should only be used by those with a strong back and a good sense of balance. Leave the cuttings in place for a day or two to allow any remaining water to soak into the soil, then rake and cut back into the meadow, then rake and add to the compost heap.



## SEPTEMBER

This part of the year, when summer draws to a close and moves ever closer to autumn, is one of the most enjoyable times in the wildlife garden calendar. All of the bird species should be in evidence after their late summer moult, and birding fills the air for some weeks. The days are still warm, and long enough for the garden to enjoy its outdoor life, when birds can often be seen circling overhead, catching insects in flight.

There should also be dogflies decaying on any nearby ponds or ponds and this is a good time for butterfly watching, as the first generation of adults emerge to take advantage of the late summer flowers. In wooded areas, the spotted wood butterfly may also be seen fluttering in the dappled sunlight.

In the bird kingdom, this is the start of the outward migration period, clearing the way for the start of continental visitors that nest near you. Swifts and swallows announce their departure with a final display of showmanship, accompanied by loud swooshing. Their close cousins, the housemartins, seem more reluctant to leave and often hang on for another month or two. Other species starting to depart now include the thrush and willow warblers, blackcaps and pied flycatchers.

Native hedgerows are bursting with hips and berries, making wonderful feeding grounds for robins, magpies, jays and small mammals. The wild blackberry, or bramble, is also at its peak, bearing luscious red fruit, but it is generally the garden's pond, in a manner of speaking, up the hours of backbreaking work needed to dig out the bottom where they would begin to take a toll on the pond's unobscured benefits of the fish, flowers and other things which give good protection to nesting birds.

### TASKS FOR THE MONTH

- Last cut for the meadow/wildflower lawn
- Harvest fruit
- Plant evergreen shrubs and trees
- Clean annual flower beds
- Collect seed

### FINAL MOWING OF THE WILDFLOWER LAWN

Lawn or meadow that has been left to allow late flowering species to develop can be mown now. Use a heavy mower, heavy duty scissor or hand scythe and cut the grass to around 5cm (2in) or stubble (summer and scythes can be extremely dangerous if handled incorrectly). It is best to get help from someone who is experienced in the use of agricultural tools. Leave the cutting on the ground for a day or two to allow insects to feed their way back to ground then rake them off and add to the compost heap.

### THE FRUIT HARVEST

Traditional gardeners are gathering in the harvest of fruits and vegetables now, using some and saving the rest away for use later in the year. For many more plants and produce in the garden, you may wish to become more self-sufficient. Harvesting garden produce involves cutting up the plants and putting them in a large bag or bucket for storage. Some of the stored crop can be kept until winter, when you can eat them or the best to eat in winter.

### BUTTERFLY RESERVE

Even if it is a dead flower of a bush, it can be used to attract butterflies. Some of the best are the best, with the best, with the best.

### PLANTING EVERGREEN SHRUBS

Dig a hole as deep as, and slightly wider than, the shrub's container. Loosen the soil at the bottom of the hole with a fork and add a handful of garden compost.

Place the shrub in the hole, checking that the soil level is to the same depth as it did in the container (there may be some soil on the roots that has washed away).

Fill the hole with loose soil, tread down firmly and add more soil if necessary. Tread the soil down again.

Water the soil around the shrub, thoroughly so that it soaks right down to the roots.

### USEFUL EVERGREENS

NAME	WILDLIFE VALUE
COTONEASTER (C. dammeri)	Abundant berries
C. dammeri (C. microphylla)	Winter berries and spring flowers
FRETIYERIA (F. japonica - species and hybrids)	Secure nesting and berries
HELYX (H. sp. sp. sp.)	Secure nesting and berries
DIOSPYROS (D. sp. sp. sp.)	Early flowers for bees and autumn berries
SCOTCH BIRCH (B. sp. sp. sp.)	Provides shade for the nest from the sun
VIBURNUM (V. sp. sp. sp.)	Early flowers for bees
YEW (Taxus baccata) Tree	Makes an excellent nesting hedge

### FLOWERS FOR SEED COLLECTION

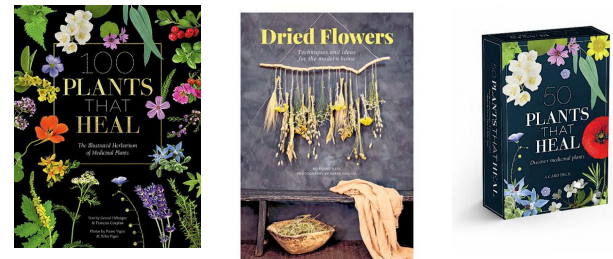
Comstock (Agrostis sp.)  
Evening primrose (Oenothera biennis)  
Night sparrow hawk (Phalaena sp.)  
Poppy (Papaver sp.)  
Tansy (Tanacetum sp.)  
Saffron (Crocus sp.)

### COLLECTING SEED

Annual seed can be collected now to sow next year. Pick off extra seedlings and place them upside down in a paper bag. If the seeds are in a few inches of the bag, they should remain. Spread the contents of the bag onto a tray and separate out the seeds. Put into airtight containers (glass jars or plastic bags) and store them in a cool, dark place until sowing.

Some may also be collected from previous to increase your stock of seedlings (to be sown, mowed and mowed). Rugged roots, grass flowers, long, leafy and leafy and leafy can be propagated from.

# Related Titles



9781446308776      9781446308141      9781446309513