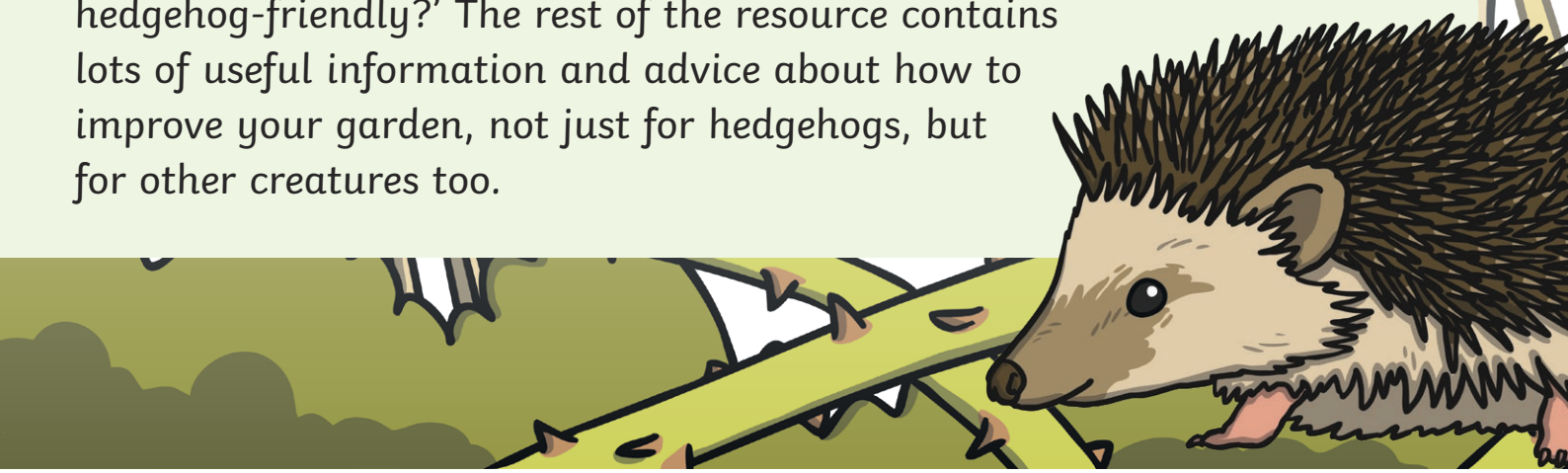
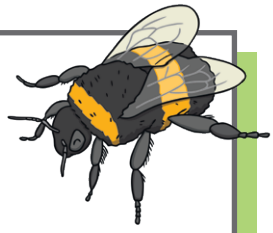
Make Your Garden Hedgehog-Friendly

The RSPB Wild Challenge award scheme is a brilliant way to spend time outdoors with your family, while experiencing and helping nature together. To sign up to the RSPB Wild Challenge and find out about the full range of activities, take a look **here**.

Here, to complement the **Make a Hedgehog Café Wild Challenge** activity, we're focusing on how you can help nature by making your garden hedgehog-friendly. Many of the strategies suggested in this resource are also great ways to look after other animals and plants. For example, making sure your garden - and your local area - is clear of litter is a fantastic way to help all of nature. Take a look at **The Big Clean-Up Wild Challenge** from the RSPB for guidance on how to go litter-picking.

How can you make your garden hedgehog-friendly? First, read the fact file on the next page to learn a little bit about hedgehogs. Next, complete the included checklist to answer the question 'Is my garden hedgehog-friendly?' The rest of the resource contains lots of useful information and advice about how to improve your garden, not just for hedgehogs, but for other creatures too.



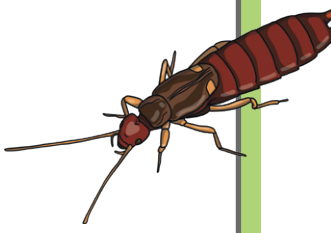


Hedgehog Fact File

Latin name: Erinaceus europaeus

Classification: Mammal

Appearance: Hedgehogs can grow to have a body length between approximately 14cm and 30cm and can weigh up to 1.1kg. They are covered with prickly spines which they rely on to protect themselves. When threatened, a hedgehog will curl up into a ball, making sure to cover the vulnerable parts of its body - its face, legs and belly (which are not protected by spines, but covered with fur).



Habitat: Hedgehogs can be found in a variety of habitats, including grasslands, hedgerows, woodland and meadows.

Diet: Hedgehogs feast mostly on beetles, caterpillars, snails and earthworms. They enjoy eating a variety of insects, like bees, ants and earwigs. Hedgehogs might also eat small mice, frogs and eggs.

Some ingredients and/or materials used might cause allergic reactions or health problems. You should ensure that you are fully aware of the allergies and health conditions of those taking part. If you have any concerns about your own or somebody else's health or wellbeing, always speak to a qualified health professional. Activities listed within the resource should always be supervised by an appropriate adult. Children should be supervised when using sharp items such as scissors or other tools. Please make sure you are aware that children may put craft items into their mouths, and that they should wash their hands afterwards. By using this resource, you acknowledge that it is the responsibility of supervising adults to ensure the safety of children in their care and that we will accept no liability as a result of the activity.
Outdoor areas provide great opportunities for play and learning, but always check for any environmental risks before taking part in outdoor activities, and only proceed if it is safe to do so. Ensure children always wash their hands after being outside. Please be respectful of nature and take care of animals and plants. We will not be held responsible for the health and safety of those participating in activities, and cannot accept any liability. By organising or participating in any activity described, you acknowledge that it is the responsibility of supervising adults to ensure the safety of children in their care.

Checklist: Is my garden hedgehog-friendly?

First, take a look at the garden space you have. Tick 'yes' or 'no' to record whether your garden contains these hedgehog-friendly features.

	yes	no
Does your garden contain a **pile of logs**?	○	○
Is there a **compost heap** in your garden?	○	○
Can you see a **pile of leaves** in your garden?	○	○
Does your garden have an **overgrown** or **wild** area?	○	○
Are there any **wildflowers** in your garden?	○	○
Is there a **pond** in your garden?	○	○
Is your garden clear of **litter** and **rubbish**?	○	○
Have you got a specially built **hedgehog home**?	○	○
Do you put out **food** and **water** for hedgehogs?	○	○
Is there a **hedgehog hole** or **tunnel** so hedgehogs can move through your garden?	○	○

How many questions did you answer 'no' to? Don't worry - there are lots of top tips on the following pages to help you create a hedgehog-friendly garden.

Make Your Garden Hedgehog-Friendly

Pile of Logs

Log piles provide a safe, secure space for hedgehogs to shelter, while also being the perfect habitat for insects - a tasty treat for hedgehogs. This means hedgehogs have a place to hibernate and a good food supply.

Wear some protective gardening gloves and collect some old, dead wood from your garden, or ask a local park or wildlife reserve for permission to take some. You might need an adult to help you.

Next, pile up the wood in a quiet corner of your garden for the ideal hedgehog hideout. You might need to occasionally replenish the corner with more wood as the old wood rots down.

Compost Heap

Compost heaps make ideal nesting sites for hedgehogs. By setting up an open air compost heap, you'll also create the perfect environment for minibeasts - hedgehogs will enjoy eating these. Be careful when turning the compost, in case a hedgehog has decided to nest in there. Take a look at the RSPB's **Make a Compost Heap Wild Challenge** for more advice.

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Pile of Leaves

Hedgehogs can use a pile of leaves as a nesting site, but they might also use leaves as bedding material for their nest in another location. Collect fallen leaves into a quiet corner of your garden and leave the pile undisturbed.

Overgrown or Wild Area

By leaving part of your garden to do its own thing, you will be helping lots of creatures. For example, areas of uncut grass are vital habitats for many insects. Hedgehogs and birds need insects as food, so they benefit from this uncut grass too. Some animals may also nest in bushes or hedges. Choose a section of your garden to leave alone. Check out the RSPB's **Let It Grow Wild Challenge** for more information.

Wildflowers

Wildflowers provide food for pollinators (like bees and butterflies) and other insects, as well as habitats for many creatures. Hedgehogs will enjoy having a supply of tasty insects to eat. Look out for wildflower seed mixes to plant in your garden and see the difference they make.

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Pond

Having a pond in your garden means any hedgehogs that visit have a consistent supply of water. Ponds also attract insects and amphibians, which hedgehogs enjoy eating. It's important that there is a gentle slope into the pond so hedgehogs can walk in and out of the water easily; try using stones, wood or chicken wire to make a ramp. Take a look at the RSPB's **Make a Mini-Pond Wild Challenge** to make use of limited garden space.

Litter or Rubbish

Because of their prickly spines, hedgehogs are likely to get tangled in litter, such as plastic wrapping, elastic bands and disposable cups. It's really important to remove any rubbish for other wildlife too; it can cause lots of problems for our environment. Take a look at the RSPB's **The Big Clean-Up Wild Challenge** for advice about litter-picking. You must always wear protective clothing and use proper equipment when picking up litter and make sure you have an adult to help you.

Netting can also be an issue for hedgehogs. Try to replace any netting in your garden with a more rigid structure. If you have a sports net in your garden (like a tennis net), make sure this is packed away when not in use.

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Hedgehog Home

Hedgehogs might choose a compost heap, leaf pile or hedgerow to nest in, but they might also enjoy nesting in a specially-designed hedgehog home. It is possible to make one of these yourself or buy one for your garden; ask an adult to help you explore this possibility. Hedgehog homes are usually made up of a main box, with a tunnel leading into it.

Food and Water

Hedgehogs will be grateful for any food or water you can provide, in case they're struggling to find any. Meaty cat food or hedgehog food is suitable. Take a look at the RSPB's **Make a Hedgehog Cafe Wild Challenge** for guidance on how to create a feeding station.

Similarly, birds benefit from having fresh water left out for them in a bird bath, so they can wash and drink. The RSPB also has information about this with their **Build a Bird Bath Wild Challenge**.

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Hedgehog Hole or Tunnel

Letting hedgehogs roam is very important. On average, a hedgehog travels 1 - 2km each night, so they need the ability to move between gardens. Chat to an adult about the possibility of linking your garden with your neighbours' by creating a 13cm x 13cm hole, or tunnel. This is an ideal size for hedgehogs, but too small for most pets. You'll need to talk to your neighbours too!