

Five Ways to Welcome Wildlife for the year ahead



January is the time for new starts so why not plan ways in which you can make your churchyard more wildlife friendly in 2026? Here are five simple things to try, maybe you could start with one or two.

- 1 Create a meadow** - choose an area of grass in full sun, currently mown short. Leave it uncut for about 14 weeks over the spring and summer. See how many wildflowers come up naturally, you will probably be surprised. Scythe or strim the long grass, rake it up and remove it to a compost heap or use it to make hay.
- 2 Help your veteran trees** - churchyards are fantastic for veteran trees, particularly yews. Gently clear below veteran and ancient trees, removing young saplings, piles of grass cuttings, sheds, grave spoil, old bottles and anything else that is there! Always remove ivy from yew trees but no need to do so from other trees unless advised to by an arboriculture expert.
- 3 Give wildlife a home** - great fun for community events, how about making bird and bat boxes, bug hotels, deadwood piles and compost bays. Swift boxes can fit behind the church tower louvres. Try a range of different sized bird boxes, including open fronted ones for Spotted Flycatcher and Robin. Place a deadwood pile in a shady spot for frogs, newts, slow worm and hedgehogs to feast on the invertebrates there.
- 4 Be a little untidy** – leave an area of tussocky grassland or scrub, perhaps against a wall or round the back. Cut and clear this every two or three years, doing a section each year. This will be fantastic shelter and great for overwintering invertebrates as well as amphibians and reptiles. Hedgehogs love places like this too.
- 5 Plant for pollinators** – fill your flowerbeds or planters with species that are useful to insects. Include native plants and grasses as well as early and late flowering plants. How about some herbs which people can enjoy too? The wildflower Viper's Bugloss is outstanding for pollinators and very attractive too.

Enjoy watching the wildlife which will take advantage of these features and please tell us what you see.



Oldberrow Church, Worcestershire