

# Hedgehogs in Winter



In late Autumn hedgehogs turn their attention to hibernation, building nests and feeding up to store energy. Here are some ways to help them through the cold Winter months.

## **Leave the leaves.**

As the trees shed their leaves, create piles around your garden to encourage creepy-crawlies for hedgehogs to eat, and provide nesting materials for hibernation.

## **Fine dining.**

Food is vital at the tail end of Autumn and the start of Winter. The best way to help is by making your garden insect-friendly, with simple features like log and leaf piles providing a natural buffet of bugs. You can give hedgehogs a boost with extra food - a dish of meaty cat or dog food works perfectly, and always provide water for wildlife in clean dishes. There's more information at <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/feed-hedgehogs/>

## **Wild patches.**

Have you left a wild patch in your garden? These are a great way to help hedgehogs and many other species. Find out more at <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/go-wild-for-hedgehogs>

If you left a patch to become wild over the Summer, letting it grow long and undisturbed, there are two options for managing it in the longer term. Either leave it completely uncut, just giving it a tidy up in early spring before new growth starts, or check the area carefully before

cutting it back now that any flowers have seeded. Leave some areas long to provide hedgehogs with nesting materials.

If you have any bare soil in your wild patch or the wider garden, you can plant wildflower seeds or bulbs in preparation for spring. Native wildflower mixes will make for a colourful display that also benefits garden wildlife.

## **Hibernating – do not disturb.**

Hedgehogs make their hibernation nests in heaps of dead leaves and timber, compost or other garden waste, so try not to disturb these until hibernation ends in the Spring.

## **What if I see a hedgehog in trouble?**

A hedgehog out in daylight may be unwell and needing help. Signs of distress are moving "drunkenly" or immobile "sunbathing". If the hedgehog is moving purposefully and appears well and active, there is probably no cause for concern. If a nest has been disturbed or damaged hedgehogs might relocate during the day. Nesting and nursing mother hedgehogs are sometimes seen for short spells in daylight, usually foraging for food or gathering nesting materials. If in doubt call the British Hedgehog Preservation Society for advice on 01584 890 801.