

**SUSTAINABILITY
IN THE EARLY
YEARS.**

EAE6005

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Discover

During the first lockdown in 2020 I found sanctuary within my garden from the uncertainty that seemed to be going on around me. In times of stress I found that sitting in the garden and listening to the birds sing and the trees swaying in the wind would calm me and help me to focus. Life before the lockdown was hectic, filled with work, after school clubs and University. In some ways the Covid-19 virus has allowed us to step back and discover what is important to us. For us as a family we discovered we enjoyed the slower pace of life.

The garden became a place that the children and I began to enjoy together and where we spent most of our time. We enjoyed watching the wildlife that came into our garden and decided to encourage more.



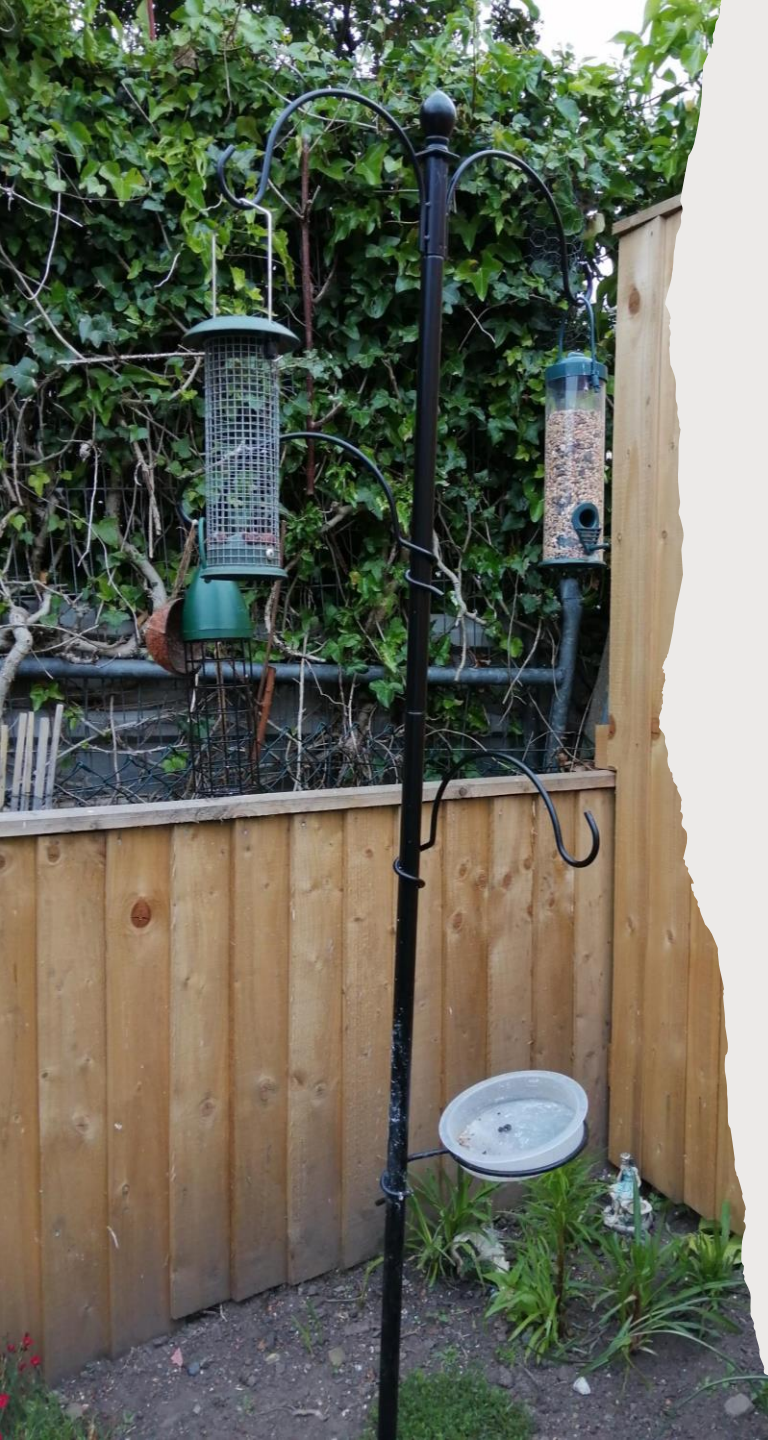
Explore

Over the past year we have been slowly transforming our garden.

It is a fenced garden, which was mainly grass, with a few established evergreen shrubs. The purpose of the garden has always been to provide a safe place for the children and dogs to play. To the rear of our garden is an old disused lane which is very overgrown, this is home to a family of foxes, who can become quite noisy at night. There are a few large Hawthorn trees surrounding my property which is where we first noticed the birds. These trees are a favourite with birds as the thorny bushes provide a safe place to rest or build a nest, these trees also produce berries from mid Autumn. These berries are particularly enjoyed by Blackbirds, red wings and fieldfares as well as Chaffinch and Starlings.

We also have a wall of Ivy to the rear of the garden which encourages insects in the winter which become food for Robins and Wrens. Ivy will also produce a black berry in mid winter which is edible for birds.

It was listening to their bird song which made us decide to invest in a bird feeder and a bird bath, to try and encourage more birds to come and visit us. This has been successful and we are seeing more and more everyday.



Did you know?

- When a bird travels they disperse the seeds they have eaten through their droppings this helps to bring plants back into our eco-systems. They may even carry these seeds from other countries overseas, meaning that birds are responsible for helping to shape our plant life (Birdlife.org, 2021).
- Some birds are pollinators and are responsible for pollinating 5% of the plants which humans require for food and medicine (Birdlife.org, 2021).
- The number of common garden birds has dropped dramatically in recent years. House sparrows for example have decreased by 71%, this is due to increased development and the intensification of farming and habit loss (Wildlife Trusts, no date).



Image: ebird.org, no date.

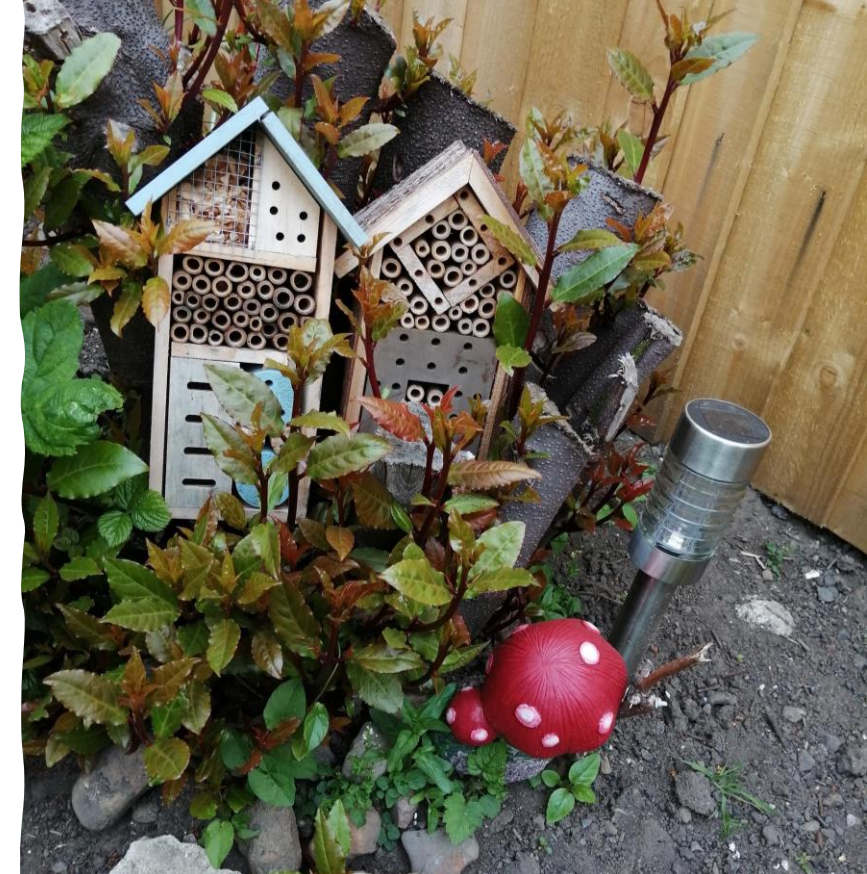


What else we have
added to our garden





After the addition of the bird feeder we decided that the old tree stump would be the perfect area to place a couple of bug hotels, so far my youngest daughter violet has only discovered a spider that had taken up home in the hotel. In the past few months we have dug up an area of grass to create a flower bed, We have planted some bulbs which are meant to attract bee's and Butterflies to the garden, these are due to flower towards the end of the summer. We have also planted some lavender and installed two raised beds which contain Red onion and Beetroot in one and Rainbow Chard in the second. As well as Strawberries, Blueberries and Tomato's growing in containers on the patio. We are adding new plants all of the time and are trying to choose plants that will flower at different times of the year so that there is always a little colour in the garden for us to look at. We are also looking to plant some bird friendly plants which can provide natural sources of food to the birds all year around.





Wildlife in our garden.

Foxes

We are two cheeky foxes,
who like to rummage through your bin,
and late at night when your asleep we like to cause an awful din,
but please do not be mad at us we do not wish you harm.

For we used to have a great big field which we would call our home,
but now it is a block of flats reaching high into the sky.

So, we had to move in close to you,
we really had no choice,

So, please do not be mad at us,
they did not hear our plea.

The men they stole our habitat,

And took it for their own,

Without a single thought for us even though it was our home.

So, please do not be mad at us we really had no choice,

Maybe you can tell our story and give foxes a voice.



Herbert the Hedgehog.

My name is Herbert Hedgehog I have very spikey hair,
if you ever see me in a ball its because I am very scared.
I like to stay up late at night when you are fast asleep,
that's when I find my tasty treats of insects, worms and slugs.
I get the name of hedgehog from where I build my home,
But if you spot me in the winter months,
curled up fast asleep,
Please do not disturb me because I like to hibernate.

Steve the starving Starling.

This is Steve, he is a starling.

He sits upon on fence and waits for scraps of food because he is always starving.

He is such a happy chap always sitting and singing out loud, and always looking proud.

He sits and waits until we are not looking, then swoops down low and grabs a snack from our plate.

It's not just us, he visits our neighbours to for snack number 2, travelling quickly down the street filling up on all sorts of tasty treats.

He is everyone's favourite bird you see, as he brings such joy with his cheerful song.

The neighbours got chatting and all agreed that something should be done for Steve.

They all got together and created a feast of all of Steve's favourite treats.

There were seeds and peanuts and fat balls galore not forgetting some mealworms which he just adored.

Steve's song was even more cheerful that day, he swooped and soared in great delight at the very sight of all of the tasty delights.

The neighbours all agreed once more, that the day was such a great success they will do it all again tomorrow!!



Conserve

- As part of this assignment we have been asked to take part in the John Muir award. This award is to encourage you to become more aware and take some responsibility for the natural environment. I was excited to involve my children in this challenge as I believe it is important for young children to engage in activities that will help to encourage wildlife into the garden and discover ways of conserving nature.
- We have installed a bird box and added another bird bath as well as making our own bird food. We are continuing to add to our flower bed trying to find plants that will add colour to our garden at different times of the year.



toilet paper roll **BIRD FEEDER**

Things we made and installed in our garden.

Upcycled toilet roll bird feeders.

What you need.

- Empty toilet roll tube.
- Peanut butter.
- Bird seed.
- String.

Method.

1. Spread peanut butter all over the toilet roll tube.
2. Roll the covered tube over a plate of bird seed.
3. Thread string through the tube and tie.
4. Hang the feeder outside and wait for your feathered friends to show up.



Reflection.

- During this very uncertain time of Covid-19 it has been a mixed bag of emotions. On the one hand I have been scared of the unknown and also craved to get back to some sort of normality. However, it has also brought me a sense of peace, allowing me time to step back and appreciate the smaller things in life that are often overlooked or taken for granted. It has given me time to really enjoy being a mum again, without the rushing from school to clubs, back home, tea, bath, bed, repeat. We have enjoyed our time together and we have been so thankful for the garden that we could escape to when we needed a break from home-schooling.
- We have felt pride in working in the garden to make it a pretty place to be rather than the blank canvas it once was. This assignment and the John Muir award has made us think even more about our place in the world and how we can improve our garden to help support the birds, bees, butterflies and other insects, knowing that we are doing our part to help their survival.