



Where kids go
wild for wildlife

How to build a “Hibernation Hotel”



Cornwall

Why build one?

An average garden could hold over 2,000 different species of invertebrate, which, in turn, support a huge number of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Most of this wildlife is not damaging to our prized flowers, fruit and vegetables, and many of the insects are, in fact, vital for the pollination of our crops, or beneficial in that they help control the pest species for us.

By creating the right habitats, we can increase the number of beneficial species in the garden, as well as helping those invertebrates that are declining in the wild, such as bumblebees

and solitary bees. By providing them with homes or places to hibernate, we can contribute to their conservation.



What is it made from?

This hibernation hotel is built entirely of recycled materials, collected from local gardens and sheds. The main structure is old wooden pallets, which are filled with ventilation bricks, garden canes, guttering pipe and tubes stuffed with straw, garden cuttings and natural materials found in the wood around; thus creating different sized spaces for invertebrates,

amphibians and small mammals to use. The bottom pallet is raised on ventilation bricks to provide a larger space for use by hedgehogs, all the pallets are tied together securely to prevent collapse, and the whole structure is covered with roofing felt and roof tiles to prevent water penetration.



Where should it be sited?

Most invertebrates and amphibians like cool, damp conditions, so siting the structure in semi shade, alongside a hedge, tree or long grass, will enable small creatures to find it more easily. Not all creatures like to be in the shade, so put tubes for solitary bees on the

sunniest side of the structure, or put them elsewhere in the garden. Choose a level surface on which to place the first pallet, and place bricks or other levelling materials underneath before building upwards, as the finished structure may end up being quite heavy, so will need a firm base.



What sized spaces are needed?

There are many ways to fill the gaps in the structure; here are some of the most useful materials with which to create wildlife-friendly spaces:

- **Dead wood.** This is becoming a very rare habitat in tidy gardens and parks, but is essential for the larvae of wood-boring beetles, such as the endangered stag beetle. It also supports fungi, which help break down the woody material, and the crevices provide spaces for centipedes, millipedes, spiders, beetles and woodlice.
- **Holes for solitary bees.** All the different species of solitary bees are excellent pollinators. The female lays her egg on top of some pollen at the end of a hollow tube and then seals the entrance with a plug of mud. A long tube can hold a number of such cells, so hollow plant stems, old bamboo canes or even holes drilled into blocks of wood, all make good nest sites for these insects. Holes of different diameters mean that many different species can be accommodated, so put garden canes inside a length of plastic pipe and place these on the warmest side of the structure to help the insects find them.
- **Frog holes.** Amphibians (frogs and toads) eat a lot of slugs and other garden pests

and, even though they need access to a pond for breeding, they spend a lot of time hiding out in dark, damp crevices at the bottom of stone walls or under rubble. Use stone, tiles or brick to create these cool spaces at the bottom of the structure.

- **Lacewing homes.** These insects, and their larvae, consume huge numbers of aphids, as well as other garden pests. Make a home for lacewings by rolling up some corrugated cardboard and putting it inside plastic pipe or tube high up in the structure.
- **Homes for ladybirds.** Ladybirds and their larvae are the best aphid predators in the garden, so create hibernation spaces for them using dry sticks and leaves inside larger spaces within the structure.
- **Straw and hay.** Putting this in any large gaps and at different levels, will allow creatures to burrow in and find safe, dry hibernation sites within the structure.

