

# Hedgehog Hints



Spring and warmer weather brings hedgehogs out of hibernation and if you're lucky, into your garden. Through the Summer months they spend nights feeding and putting on weight, ready for the next hibernation in late Autumn. They feed on a wide range of insects including beetles, caterpillars, earwigs, grubs, millipedes, slugs and snails travelling up to 2 miles during a night's foraging.

Hedgehogs move between gardens. If your garden is contained by a fence or wall, make a small opening on each side, (about 12cm x 12cm) so they can wander between neighbouring gardens. Heaps of leaves, log piles or compost heaps encourage invertebrate creatures that are hedgehogs' favourite diet and are also refuges for the hogs during daylight. Over-enthusiastic gardeners are dangerous for hedgehogs. Check before lighting bonfires, strimming and lawn mowing, especially for small young ones that are easily overlooked.

A hedgehog out in daylight may be unwell and needing help. Signs of distress are moving "drunkenly" or immobile "sunbathing". Nesting and nursing mother hedgehogs are sometimes seen for short spells in daylight, moving purposefully, usually foraging for food, or gathering nesting materials. If a nest has been disturbed or damaged hedgehogs might relocate during the day. They may be out at dawn or dusk especially during summertime when nights are short. If the

hedgehog is moving purposefully and appears well and active, there is probably no cause for concern. If in doubt call the British Hedgehog Preservation Society for advice on 01584 890 801.

Improve your chances of seeing hedgehogs by putting out food in the evening as the light fades - but not bread, milk, bird seed, mealworms, peanuts or fruit. These are bad for hedgehog health. There is special hedgehog food available from pet shops and online suppliers. Cat biscuits, meat-based dog or cat food are also suitable, preferably chicken or turkey flavour. Kitten biscuits are perfect as they suit small mouths. A dish of water is a good idea too. Sightings can be recorded on the map at [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org) where there is more information about hedgehogs.

In Autumn hedgehogs look for places to hibernate. As well as the natural sites mentioned above they will use human-provided homes. Making a hedgehog house in the Summer leaves time for it to settle into the surroundings, ready for Autumn occupation. It can be made of brick (see [www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-a-hedgehog-house](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-a-hedgehog-house)) or wood (see [www.rspb.org.uk/hedgehoghome](http://www.rspb.org.uk/hedgehoghome)) or bought from [www.riversidewoodcraft.co.uk/collections/hedgehog-houses](http://www.riversidewoodcraft.co.uk/collections/hedgehog-houses) or <https://cosy-cabin.com/products/nestguest-hedgehog-house>