As our climate changes, gardens are becoming even more vital to wildlife and people. They can provide shade, absorb carbon, soak up flood water and help to cool buildings.

A well managed network of gardens stretching across Sussex will contribute to the creation of a living landscape, helping wildlife to move more freely and adapt to climate change.

Want to know how to improve your garden for wildlife, or build a pond? Have you seen something interesting and want to know what it is? If it’s about wildlife, get in touch.

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Skill Level: 2 out of 5
Time of Year: All Year

• Wildlife Friendly: Habitat walls are grand mini-beast hotels where invertebrates can shelter and lay their eggs. They can also be feeding places for insects, amphibians, reptile and small mammals, and provide them with nesting materials.
• Climate Friendly: Can offer cool shady places and extra nesting and shelter where natural alternatives may be limited.

Follow these 8 simple steps to create your habitat tower:
1. Find three to seven old wooden pallets, ideally the same size, and remove protruding nails.
2. Choose the location. The best spots are level, sheltered and either next to a wall, under a tree or in a shady corner.
3. Lay out some bricks length-ways on the ground. This will be the base of your tower.
4. Stack the pallets, as evenly as possible, flat side down. You could secure them together with long screws if the pallets are uneven or your spot is exposed.
5. Collect material to create dark nooks and crannies in the gaps in the pallets. These are the places where insects can shelter or nest. You can use dead seed heads and stalks, small piles of rocks, old wood or wood with holes drilled in it, bundles of twigs, egg cartons or containers stuffed with straw.
6. Fill the gaps in the pallets with your material. Use the bottom level for larger items, such as pots, bigger pieces of wood or piles of sticks and leaves. Don’t worry if you don’t have enough material to hand. You can add more over time as the wall develops.

7. Cover the top of the wall with bark. We recommend you get this from a local tree surgeon. Don’t disturb old pieces of bark, which may already be sheltering insects.
8. Once you have filled the gaps don’t disturb the wall, give wildlife a chance to establish.

The Importance of Deadwood
Artificial habitats like this bug tower can provide a great addition to any garden, but should only be included where more natural habitats cannot be provided. Deadwood is an extremely valuable feature of many habitats. It may look unsightly to some, but pieces of standing and fallen decaying wood are vital to many species. Even just a few bushes kept beyond a natural life span provide great habitat for many insects, fungi, lichens and mosses. A decaying tree with a broken branch or a small cavity can provide an ideal nest site for a bird or roost for a bat. Here are a few hints and suggestions about managing deadwood in your garden:

• Providing they pose no risk of harm or injury, try to leave standing dead trees and shrubs to rot down naturally.
• A log pile can benefit invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, but make sure it is in the right place. Try to leave the wood in direct contact with the ground in dappled shade and in compact piles to maintain humidity. Avoid cutting wood into small pieces as larger diameter pieces hold most value. Please do not remove wood from woodlands and hedges - it is an important feature of these habitats.
• In smaller gardens, terraces or balconies lay logs alongside planters or part bury them in a tub along with some plants.