

Carrickfergus Borough Council is committed to enhancing biodiversity through:

1. Reducing chemical inputs in our properties;
2. Not using peat based products;
3. Planting wildflower meadows and thousands of trees since 2000;
4. Deploing the illegal collection of plants from the wild;
5. Ensuring where possible that wood products used, are genuinely certified as coming from forests that are well managed with full regard to the environment;
6. Employing horticultural best practice and encouraging a sustainable approach to the work we do;

7. Monitoring, recording and enhancing biodiversity at our open spaces;
8. Providing relevant scientific and practical advice to our customers;
9. Maintaining plant genetic diversity by growing a wide range of ornamental plants;
10. Providing advice on the control of invasive alien plants.

For Further Information:

If you would like to improve biodiversity in Carrickfergus Borough why not follow some of the simple advice above. However, if you would like more information contact the Councils 'Parks & Countryside Service' by visiting our website www.carrickfergus.gov.uk.
t 028 9335 8039 or e inbloom@carrickfergus.org



10. Recycle the plant material in your garden as compost. (Composters are available for £5 from the Council Sullatober Depot t 028 9335 1192). Leaf litter, in particular, makes superb compost. Always check your compost heap for wildlife before disturbing. Use the compost instead of peat based products.

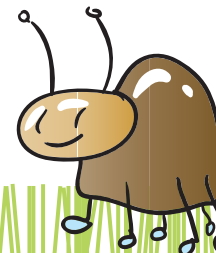


should be provided with food and water throughout the year and not just winter. Many birds will benefit from the wide range of insects, worms and other invertebrate animals in your garden.

9. Think carefully about what you use in your garden. Consider what part of the world materials come from such as potting compost, plants and wooden furniture. Are the habitats from which these materials come under threat?

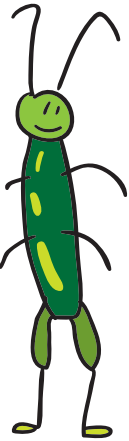
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www.carrickfergus.org



Ecosystems are fragile and if one collapses many others are likely to follow, causing mass extinction of species.

Currently, it is estimated that more than 10,000 species become extinct worldwide each year, and this figure is rising.



Biodiversity encompasses all living things; the diversity of species, the variation of genes that enables organisms to evolve and adapt, and the diverse ecosystems within which organisms interact in a complex web of interdependent relationships. These ecosystems are fragile and if one collapses many others are likely to follow, causing mass extinction of species. Currently, it is estimated that more than 10,000 species become extinct worldwide each year, and this figure is rising. The central cause of this extinction is human beings.

(California Academy of Sciences, Biodiversity Resource Centre. www.calacademy.org 2002).



The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG) identified 15 major issues affecting Biodiversity in Northern Ireland in its report 'Biodiversity in Northern

Ireland: Recommendations to Government for a Biodiversity Strategy'. For each of these issues the NIBG proposed a number of specific recommendations. Visit the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) website: www.ehsni.gov.uk for further information.

So why is biodiversity under threat?

The following factors are significant in the decline of biodiversity in the UK:

- Agricultural intensification, with fields ploughed and sown immediately after cropping, has reduced the amount of seed-rich stubble during the

winter months thus causing loss of habitats.

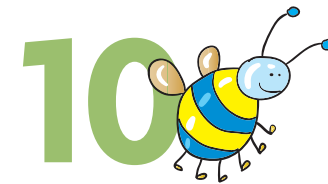
- Removing an estimated 230,000 miles of native hedgerows since the 1960s and annual flail cutting of those that remain, has led to massive loss of habitat and the removal of food sources.
- Ploughing out of headlands and mowing of field margins, ditches and rough grass again depletes habitats and food sources.
- The 'tidying up' of buildings and houses, and the conversion of barns into accommodation, has led to the loss of crevices and openings into roof spaces. These would have been previously used as nesting, roosting and overwintering sites for wildlife.
- The depletion of specific ecosystems such as wildflower meadows, unimproved grassland, woodland, wetland, heath and salt marsh has led to habitat loss.
- An unnatural culture of tidiness in the countryside, on road verges and in open spaces generally means habitats are being altered.

How do gardens fit in?

In the face of such alarming trends the average garden may seem an unlikely ally to biodiversity. However, of UK's 23 million hectares it is estimated that gardens in private ownership account for 270,000 hectares. These huge areas of land are ecosystems in their own right and are of great significance to the biodiversity of Carrickfergus and the rest of the world. Furthermore, the way in which we garden also has a direct bearing on biodiversity.

How can gardens help biodiversity?

Most gardens are already of great significance to biodiversity. The combination of habitats, soils and native and exotic plants create a unique environment. By adopting some or all of the measures below, the biodiversity in your garden can be further enhanced. Always remember that biodiversity is reliant on complex interactions and that the tiniest insect, lichen or fungus can be of huge significance to the more 'obvious' species such as birds and mammals.



ways to help encourage biodiversity in your garden:

1. Use ornamental plants that provide a food source over a long period. Include nectar and pollen-rich plants for bees, butterflies and other flower visiting insects, and fruiting trees and shrubs for mammals and birds. Night flowering or scented species will benefit moths.
2. Leaving dead wood on trees is hugely beneficial to biodiversity, although it is rarely safe to do so in the average garden. Alternatively, use dead wood as a garden ornament, or create a feature from a log pile. This will benefit invertebrates, fungi, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
3. Consider cutting back some of the perennials in spring that provide a winter food source for birds and mammals. If left, many grasses and perennials with bold seed heads, stems and foliage will enhance the overwintering potential and

survival rates of beneficial species.

4. Reduce the use of chemicals, particularly to control insect pests. All insects are an important part of the natural food chain in your garden. The chain includes sparrows, blue tits, ladybirds and lacewings that are natural predators of insect pests.
5. A water feature without fish (*it need only be a washing-up bowl set into the ground*) will enable amphibians to spawn. They will return the favour by controlling slugs and snails.
6. Reduce the size of your lawn, or consider leaving part uncut. Long grass can be beneficial to many species and reducing mowing cuts emissions and helps preserve fossil fuels.
7. Turn all or part of your lawn into a wildflower meadow. This will require careful management but can be hugely rewarding.
8. Install bird feeders, bird, hedgehog and bat boxes, solitary bee nests, ladybird and lacewing homes and so on. Remember, birds

