

## St Alban's going for Bronze in 2024

### Hedge-hoggy facts

Hedgehogs live for around two-five years in the wild, though some have lived up to ten!

Adult hedgehogs have up to 7,000 spines and a small, hidden tail.

Hedgehog spines are actually modified hairs made from keratin, the same stuff as your nails!

Hedgehogs hibernate between November and March but may wake up occasionally to eat, go to the toilet or change nest sites.

Hedgehog poo is dark and up to 5cm long. If they've been eating lots of beetles it will be full of shimmering beetle wingcases.



Gardens are crucial for hedgehogs, they link up habitats and feeding grounds with extra green space where they hedgehog can safely hunt, hibernate, and nest.

Sadly, many UKs gardens are turning into poorer homes for wildlife. Paving, decking and the removal of grass, trees and plants mean hogs can no longer live their normal garden lifestyle.

### Let's help our Hedgehogs

By making some really simple changes, we can help make our gardens as hedgehog friendly as possible.

### Go chemical-free

Hedgehogs are natural pest controllers and eat a lot of the critters you might want to see less of in your garden. Ditching slug pellets means more slugs, which means more hedgehog food!

Do not use weedkiller, using it on your lawn means less earthworms, one of a hedgehog's favourite delicacies, birds love worms too, and worms eat and recycle organic matter to keep our soil healthy.

The hedgehog's favourite food are beetles, but they also like caterpillars. Moth caterpillars are especially easy to access as many species burrow down in the ground to pupate, making easy pickings for hungry hedgies. We can encourage moths to lay eggs in our gardens by planting a mix of native plants such as honeysuckle, dog rose, hawthorn and blackthorn, which the caterpillars feed on. Don't worry the hedgehog won't eat all of them so you'll soon have lovely moths to look at as well.



**Bonfires.** A hedgehog nightmare. Guy Fawkes Night falls right at the start of hedgehog hibernation season, when many are tucked up in the wood-piles we're planning on setting alight. If you want a bonfire at any time of year, build it immediately before burning it, but always check it before lighting, regardless of when it was built.



Leaving a **wild corner** in your garden that is a little rougher around the edges benefit all kinds of wildlife, especially invertebrates. It's also fantastic for hedgehogs who feast on things that creep and crawl. Why not let a corner of your garden go mad with native plants and grasses like meadow foxtail, knapweed, and ox-eye daisy? Pollinating insects will also benefit, so what's not to love? As well as acting like a hedgehog buffet, tussocky patches make perfect daytime nesting areas for hogs.

**Feeding our spikey friends** - Hedgehogs sometimes need a helping hand and will always appreciate a back-up food supply, especially as you never really know what the weather is going to do these days!

Very dry periods can make natural foods like earthworms much harder to get hold of, while mild winters could wake hogs up from hibernation only for them to find there are few insects about. The best supplementary foods to leave out in your garden are specially formulated hedgehog food, or meat-based cat or kitten food (no fish flavours).

Do not feed Hedgehogs with bread or milk as this can make them poorly. Fresh water is the only thing you should give hedgehogs to drink.

**Be careful when you are gardening** – this time of year we tidy up our gardens and clear away unwanted greenery. BEFORE YOU DO Check for hoggy visitors.....Long grass, wood-piles and leaf-mounds are irresistible for tired hogs and mums-to-be, so always make sure you check them for hedgies before doing work in the garden. Mowers and strimmers are one of the main causes of hedgehog injuries, causing horrific, often fatal damage, so carefully search your garden for spiky visitors before seeing to your garden.



If you have a **pond**, make it hedgehog safe. Hogs need to stay hydrated, and love refreshing ponds. Although hedgehogs are great swimmers, if they fall into a pond with steep sides they can't climb out again and will drown. Simple solution is to use a pile of stones, a piece of wood or some chicken wire to create a ramp. If you don't have a pond you can leave your local hogs some water in a shallow bowl.

**Hedgehog Home** a log pile offers a sheltered spot for local hogs to sleep and start a family, but also serves as a hedgehog buffet, as insects to take shelter inside. The fallen leaves in your garden make great hoggy nesting material!



**Make a hedgehog hole** Hedgehogs can roam an average distance of 2km in a single night to feed? Male hedgehogs can even cover up to 3km a night in search of females during breeding season! They can't take these midnight strolls if their route is blocked by impenetrable walls and fences that constrict their habitat. So give them a helping hand by creating a

hedgehog hole? It only needs to be around 13cm x 13cm (the size of a CD). If you aren't able to do this you could make a small tunnel underneath, but either way, check with your adjoining neighbour before making any holes.



**Send us some photos of your Hedgehog friendly spaces and we'll add them to our May Newsletter.**