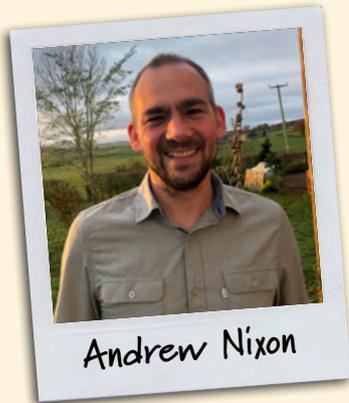




CARBON WORKOUT GUIDE: HOW TO TURN GREEN FINGERS INTO GREEN ACTION

**A SIX-POINT CARBON WORKOUT PLAN FOR GARDENERS TO SUPPORT
THE COUNTY'S NET ZERO PLANS**

HEREFORDSHIRE IS AIMING TO BE NET ZERO CARBON BY 2030 TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.



The Herefordshire Wildlife Trust has partnered with [Herefordshire Climate and Nature Action Partnership](#) to put together this six-point guide as part of the Greener Footprints campaign, a county-wide communications and engagement programme. Its aim is to encourage, mobilise, and inspire citizens, communities, and organisations to create a movement of positive climate and nature action on a scale never seen before in the county.

Andrew Nixon, Senior Conservation Manager at Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and a member of the Climate and Nature Partnership Board, offers some tips on how to keep your garden healthy, store carbon, and help wildlife.

We love to keep our gardens tidy but if we do too much ‘tidying’ we can affect the garden’s ability to store carbon.

1. A WILDLIFE POND

Any pond can become a feeding ground for birds, hedgehogs, and bats – the best natural garden pest controllers! Your pond needn’t be big. A washing-up bowl, a large plant pot, or a disused sink could all be repurposed as ponds, providing you make sure creatures can get in and out. Don’t forget to let the pond fill naturally with rainwater as tap water contains chemicals. Add some plants like lesser spearwort or miniature waterlily and wait to see what happens. Ponds, and the plants in them, are also great at storing carbon.

2. WILDLIFE HEDGEROWS

Hedges are a better choice of boundary for wildlife than fences or walls, especially if native trees and shrubs are used. Hedges allow wildlife to move about between gardens and other spaces, and provide feeding and breeding opportunities.

Hedges offer food in the form of leaves, nectar-rich flowers, berries, fruits, seeds and nuts, and are also good hunting grounds for predators seeking insects and other invertebrates. They make natural windbreaks, creating sheltered areas in the garden, which is particularly important for butterflies. They also create areas of shade, increasing the range of habitats within the garden for wildlife and people! Informal hedges and trees are better than those that are regularly clipped; for instance, hawthorn, holly, and privet will produce few or no flowers and berries if kept trim.



3. CREATING A GRAVEL GARDEN

Surfaced spaces have all kinds of uses. You may need off-street parking, or a low-maintenance alternative to a lawn; a path running between flower beds, or just somewhere to sit and enjoy the garden. There are many surfaces to choose from – paving slabs, granite sets, bricks, decking, turf. But, on balance, gravel can be one of the more hospitable options when it comes to wildlife. It is low-maintenance and relatively cheap, but it provides the perfect environment for drought-tolerant planting, attracting wildlife when other parts of the garden may not. It is also permeable helping the ground to soak up water during heavy rainfall. Try to avoid using poured concrete which is impermeable and has high carbon emissions.

4. MAKE IT MORE THAN 'NO MOW' MAY

Have you taken part in 'no mow' May before? Allowing your grass to grow long doesn't just save you time and energy it also helps your garden to store more carbon and creates a haven for wildlife.

All plants take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen, the carbon that is taken in is 'captured' by the plants, but when the grass is mown its ability to take in CO₂ and give off oxygen is affected.

Longer grass can be a refuge for wildlife, allowing them to move across open spaces in safety from predators. Putting away the mower for a while will help flowers to bloom on your lawn, providing food for pollinators and providing a respite from the sea of green. You may not be able to resist mowing all your lawn but why not leave some areas uncut and for the rest reduce the number of times you cut it, once a month is a good amount to aim for.



5. CREATE A 'WILD PATCH' IN YOUR GARDEN



You don't have to let your whole garden go wild to encourage more wildlife in. Why not designate a corner and let it go wild? Maybe add a shrub like hawthorn and pile some logs in its shade as hibernation space for amphibians and hedgehogs. Add a pile of stones in a sunny spot providing a space for reptiles to bask in the sun. Let the grass grow long and encourage nettles, brambles, and thistles to grow, these not only provide a source of food themselves but attract more insects which can in turn be a food source for bats and hedgehogs.

For advice on how to create these ideas, visit the wildlife gardening section of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's website:

<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/wildlifegardening>.

6. COMMIT TO NATURE ACTION BY SIGNING OUR PLEDGE

Take the Greener Footprints pledge [here](#) to enhance the natural environment and at the same time address the impacts of climate change on our wildlife.

We'd love to know what you end up doing so we can promote it via our communications channels – just email us at info@greenerfootprints.co.uk. You can download free promotional Greener Footprints campaign materials [here](#) to share your progress.



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Herefordshire
Wildlife Trust