

This information was adapted from our Community Orchardling Certificate. If you'd like to access more in-depth information, develop your practical skills, and meet other growers, check out our courses at <https://theorchardproject.org.uk/accredited-courses/>

## Encouraging Biodiversity

A biodiverse orchard will be healthier because the complexity of the system will ensure no one organism has the ability to take over, therefore a natural balance is achieved.

- Support tree health by weeding around the base to ensure no competition
- Keep trees well-watered and fed, especially young trees
- Prune trees well to avoid encouraging disease
- Encourage a range of invertebrates and animals that will keep pest populations down, e.g. earwigs, hoverflies, wasps, ladybirds, birds.
- Encourage a range of insects that will act as pollinators for fruit trees, e.g. bees, flies, beetles, moths, butterflies

If you are lucky enough to have older fruit trees, you will have an even greater range of wildlife, some of which is only found in old orchards.

## Dead and Decaying Wood

Decaying deadwood does not harbour disease and there is no conflict between plentiful deadwood habitats and sound orchard management. Several species of bee nest in deadwood, including red mason bees and leafcutter bees.

- One of the most important habitats for species diversity
- Include range of size and species of deadwood – the bigger the better
- Standing deadwood is dry and warm, logs on the ground are damp and decay quicker.

## Bug hotels

They are excellent habitat, and an ideal one will have:

- a roof or roofs to keep things dry
- a sunny aspect, since most species prefer warmth
- stability – don't let it swing around in the wind
- height – 1m or more above ground

Bamboo canes or hollow stems stuffed securely into a container, along with some kind of roof, make simple bee hotels. Different size tubes attract different species of bee.



Mason bees, *Osmia* sp., by Russell Miller

## Fruit

Fresh and fallen fruit is great for all wildlife.

## Old fruit trees

The best fruit trees for wildlife are big, old trees, the bigger the better. If you have space, include trees on vigorous rootstocks. As the trees get bigger and older, they develop rot holes and cavities that are essential for specialist invertebrates and fungi.

## Water

Even if you do not have space for a pond, you could have a bird bath or a scrape in the ground that collects rainwater. If you keep it topped up, birds and other animals will appreciate it, but ephemeral water pools are natural and many species are adapted to temporary water source.

## Plants for pollinators

Ideally you want a diversity of flowering plants that flower throughout the year. These will offer a year-round food supply for pollinators. Some very good 'out of season' plants that offer excellent forage include:

### Late autumn



Excellent for overwintering insects.  
Ivy *Hedera helix*, by Forest & Kim Starr [CC BY 3.0], via Wikimedia Commons.



*Elaeagnus x ebbingei*, by Leo Michels (Own work, [www.imagenes-plantarum.de](http://www.imagenes-plantarum.de)) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons.

### Winter



*Mahonia aquifolium* by Kor!An (Андрей Корзун) (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0], via Wikimedia Commons.



Winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, by Kurt Stüber [1] [GFDL or CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia Commons

### Early spring



Cherry plum *Prunus cerasifera* and *Prunus Okame*, by Bernie (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 or GFDL], via Wikimedia Commons



Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, by Rasbak (Own work) [GFDL] or CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia



Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, by Andy Rogers (originally posted to Flickr as Gorse flowers) [CC BY-SA 2.0], via