

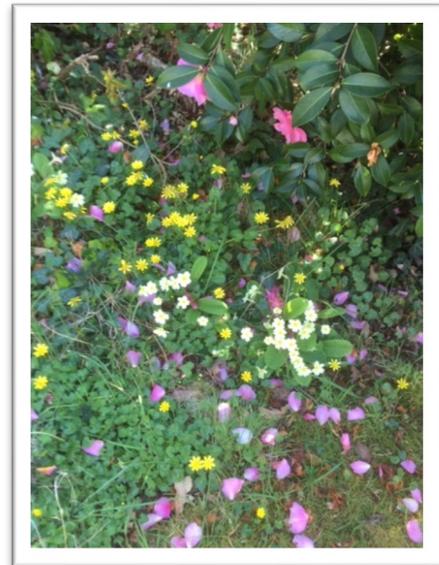
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## Gardening for wildlife – nature needs our help too

One of the things that kept me busy during lock-down was gardening. Our garden isn't very big – it is typical of houses on the rural fringes of towns in south east Cornwall. It has lawn areas, flower borders and some un-managed areas which are purposely allowed to do whatever they wish. One example of these is an area of spring flowers that appeared early in lock-down, with celendines, primroses and camellias.

My gardening in lock-down started with an attack on the ivy that grows on our garden walls. We also planted some seed potatoes in an area that had previously been the home to some over-mature ornamental conifers, and in doing so, we noticed how much our garden is used by wildlife.



*Spring flowers in the garden*

First it was the slow worms that appeared from under stones and from under areas of ground cover mesh. Then it was hedgehog droppings, lots of them. Then in early April we spotted a hedgehog hunting for bugs under some camellia bushes.

We thought about the hedgehogs, and decided to make them a hedgehog house and provide somewhere for them to have a continuous source of clean water for drinking, during the hot weather.

Climate change results in more extreme weather patterns. Higher temperatures increase evaporation and consequently result in less surface water available for wildlife.

While in lockdown, April 2020 was the sunniest April on record. Aprils in 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014 and 2020 were all in the ten warmest Aprils since records began in 1884. Experts are broadly in agreement that heatwaves will increase in both severity and duration during the coming years.

So, with our concern for the wildlife in and near our garden, we set up a “Hedgehog Corner” near the potato plants. We used an upturned dustbin lid, surrounded by bits of rock that were already in the garden, and filled it with fresh water, cleaning it out and replenishing the water daily. We purchased an infra-red wildlife camera, which cost about £90 (including the memory card) and set it up on a garden fork near the impromptu wildlife drinking area.



*Hedgehog Corner with the wildlife cam strapped to a garden fork*

We have been totally rewarded for our efforts, with regular appearances most nights by two hedgehogs, stopping by for a drink. It also attracts a cute little mouse that darts around. We even had a visit from a somewhat startled large fox one night. And early morning visits from sparrows, chaffinches, blue tits, and blackbirds. Even with the weather changing, the hedgehogs still come for their drink of fresh water most nights.



*A recent still from Hedgehog Cam – a thirsty hedgehog!*

To conclude, I agree with Edwina in that in these difficult times we should be kind to one another, but I think we should be kind to nature too. Providing a clean, fresh water source for wildlife can be very easy to do and gives so much pleasure.