



5a. *How to*: Create a wildlife-friendly garden

Why is it important?

Green space within a city encompasses everywhere vegetation grows. Within a dental setting, it applies if the dental practice or surrounding grounds have any kind of green area or garden, which can improve air quality, and provide protection against floods and heat-waves. Gardens are a significant contributor to urban biodiversity by providing food, and shelter could form a complete habitat for certain species of insects and smaller animals.

The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare has developed the **NHS Forest**, a national programme to increase the quality and use of green space on or near to healthcare estates for staff, patients and the local community to use for exercise, rest and relaxation. Natural environments have enormous benefits for people's wellbeing as evidenced by many research studies. For example, hospital patients who have a view of trees from their window have been shown to recover more quickly and to need fewer painkillers than similar patients who can't see trees from their beds.

To maximise the biodiversity in your practice's green space, native plants are the ideal. Fruit such as berries, melon, squash, cucumber, blossoming trees and herbs such as mint, rosemary and sage are all attractive to insects. Vertical structures, built from multiple layers of different plant heights can provide more spaces for wildlife to co-exist. Areas of standing water such as containers filled with water or even larger ponds can also help attract insects, birds and amphibians. Habitats for insects including solitary bees can be encouraged by making insect homes using bamboo canes tied together.



What does sustainable practice look like?

Modelled example

Bill is an associate dentist at a mixed NHS/dental practice, which recently decided to redevelop their small back garden to try and provide a space for staff to enjoy and to encourage local biodiversity.

They consulted with their local wildlife trust and decided to build a small pond, plant a variety of trees and shrubs, grow some beans and provide two bird feeders.

This took some time and involved input from all staff members, who were encouraged to contribute ideas during two staff meetings. The resulting area has become a staff favourite for lunch and there are plans to plant more vegetables during the coming year. Bill regularly hears frogs around the pond area and has noticed several species of finch have begun to nest in the garden.

Sara Harford, Darshini Ramasubbu, Brett Duane, Frances Mortimer - Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (2018)

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Modelled example *continued*

During the last staff teambuilding day, they visited local beekeepers and learnt how to collect honey. They are considering adding a hive to the garden and have a team meeting planned to discuss this next week. In the interim, they have decided to sponsor a hive through the British Beekeepers Association

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/adopt-a-beehive-info>



Actions

KEY:

Implementation: Easy = Less Easy =

Investment Cost: Low = High =

Financial return on Investment (ROI): Low = High =

Environmental benefit: Small = Large =

- If you have a garden, consult with local wildlife trusts, beekeepers or local nature partnerships about promoting biodiversity



- Mow lawns less often



- Choose insect-friendly plants



- Choose native plants



- Leave left aside areas (piles of fallen leaves, branches)



- Think about providing insect habitats (bug hotels)



- Place bird food out in winter



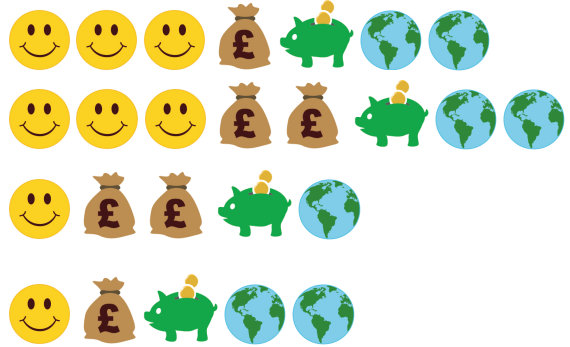
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Actions *continued*

- Avoid pesticides
- Plant out the balconies
- Place nest boxes in the roof eaves
- Support staff to volunteer with local conservation organisations



Resources

Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and Green space:

<https://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/what-we-do/green-space-and-health>

NHS forest video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5bD5AGetbc>

Royal Horticultural Society- encouraging wildlife in your garden

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/encourage-wildlife-to-your-garden>

Beekeeping in urban settings

<http://www.urbanbees.co.uk/faq/faq.htm>

Duane B, Ramasubbu D, Harford S, Steinbach I, Stancliffe R, Ballantyne G.(in press). Environmental sustainability and biodiversity within the dental practice. British Dental Journal.

Dental Susnet, online network for improving the sustainability of dental services:

<https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/dental-susnet>