Garden Wildlife Spotter

How many can you find? Tick each one when you spot it.

Spotter's name _____ **Date** _____ **I found** _____ **/ 12**



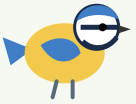
Robin

Orange-red face and breast. Sings all year.



Blackbird

Males are black with a yellow-orange beak.



Blue tit

Blue cap, yellow tummy. Loves a feeder.



House sparrow

Chatty brown birds that gather in gangs.



Hedgehog

Out at dusk. Listen for snuffling!



Frog

Smooth, damp skin. Look near ponds.



Bumblebee

Big, fuzzy and buzzy. Busy on flowers.



Butterfly

Visits sunny flowers on warm, still days.



Ladybird

Red with black spots. Count them!



Snail

Carries its shell home. Out after rain.



Earthworm

Dig gently in damp soil to find one.



Spider

Eight legs. Look for webs in morning dew.

Minibeast Hunt

Grab a pot, a magnifying glass and a grown-up. Search each place below and write down what you find.

Where I looked	What I found	How many?
Under a log or stone		
In long grass		
On flowers		
On leaves and stems		
In the soil		
On walls and fences		

Count the legs

Counting legs is how scientists sort minibeasts into groups. What did yours have?

0
LEGS
Worms, slugs and snails

6
LEGS
Insects: beetles, ants, bees and ladybirds

8
LEGS
Spiders and harvestmen

14
LEGS
Woodlice

Lots
OF LEGS
Centipedes and millipedes

The minibeast hunter's code

1. Be gentle. Minibeasts are small and easily hurt.
2. Put logs and stones back the way you found them.
3. Return every minibeast to where you found it.
4. Wash your hands when you've finished.

Build a Bug Hotel

Give minibeasts a cosy place to stay. Big or small, every bug hotel helps.



1. **Pick a spot**
   Somewhere flat and sheltered, close to plants, with a little sunshine.
2. **Build the frame**
   Use an old wooden box or crate, or stack bricks with gaps between them.
3. **Fill every gap**
   Pack in stems, cones, bark, leaves and straw. Mix them up so lots of different bugs find a room.
4. **Add a roof**
   Lay an old roof tile or slate on top to keep the rain out.
5. **Watch and wait**
   Check back every few weeks to see who has moved in. Try not to disturb your guests.

You will need

- A wooden box, crate or some bricks
- Hollow stems or bamboo canes
- Pine cones
- Dry leaves and straw
- Bark and twigs
- Short logs with holes drilled in
- An old roof tile or slate

Who might check in?

Solitary bees	hollow stems, drilled holes
Ladybirds	dry leaves, pine cones
Woodlice	damp bark, rotting wood
Beetles	logs at the bottom
Spiders	gaps and corners

Short on space? Make a mini hotel: cut both ends off a plastic bottle, pack it with rolled-up cardboard and hollow stems, and hang it on its side somewhere sheltered.

Grown-ups: please do any cutting or drilling.

Is your garden wildlife-friendly?

Small changes make a big difference. Tick off what you already do, then pick one new thing to try this year.

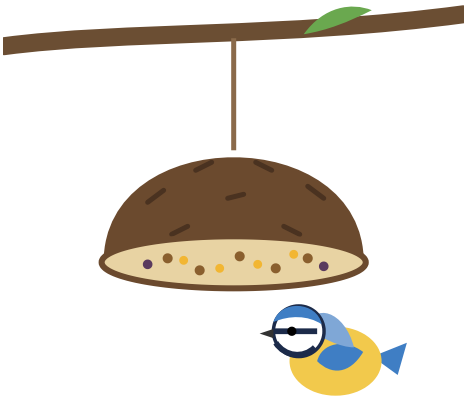
- [ ] **Leave a wild corner**
  Let a patch of grass grow long for insects and small mammals.
- [ ] **Make a hedgehog highway**
  Cut a 13 x 13cm gap in your fence so hedgehogs can travel between gardens.
- [ ] **Add some water**
  A shallow dish or mini pond, with a stone so anything that falls in can climb out.
- [ ] **Plant for pollinators**
  Pick flowers that bloom from early spring right through to autumn.
- [ ] **Build a log pile**
  Rotting wood is home to beetles, woodlice and fungi.
- [ ] **Go easy on chemicals**
  Skip slug pellets and pesticides. They harm the wildlife that eats your pests.
- [ ] **Put up a bird box**
  Fix it out of strong sun and away from busy feeders.
- [ ] **Keep feeders clean**
  Wash feeders and bird baths regularly to stop disease spreading.
- [ ] **Let the lawn flower**
  Leave some dandelions and clover in bloom for the bees.
- [ ] **Leave the seedheads**
  Hold off the autumn tidy. Seeds feed birds and hollow stems shelter insects.
- [ ] **Check before you burn**
  Hedgehogs sleep in garden piles. Build bonfires on the day you light them.
- [ ] **Feed hedgehogs right**
  Fresh water and meaty cat or dog food. Never milk or bread.

Our one new thing this year: _____

Make a Coconut Bird Feeder

A winter feast for robins, tits and sparrows, served in a coconut shell.

1. **Get the shell ready**
   Rinse out a clean half coconut shell. A grown-up can make a small hole in the top for the string.
2. **Soften the fat**
   Leave the lard or suet out until it's at room temperature. No need to melt it. Chop it into cubes.
3. **Mix it up**
   Add the dry ingredients and squish it all together with your fingers until it sticks.
4. **Fill the shell**
   Thread the string through the hole with a big knot inside, then press the mixture in firmly.
5. **Let it set**
   Pop it in the fridge for about an hour.
6. **Hang it up**
   Hang it open side down from a branch, near a bush but out of reach of cats. Then watch who visits!



THE MAGIC MIX
1 part fat to 2 parts dry ingredients

You will need

- Half a coconut shell
- Lard or suet
- Bird seed
- Porridge oats (uncooked)
- Grated cheese
- Raisins or sultanas
- String and a mixing bowl

Never feed birds

Fat from a roasting tin. It stays soft and smears on their feathers.

Desiccated coconut. It swells up inside them.

Milk. Birds can't digest it.

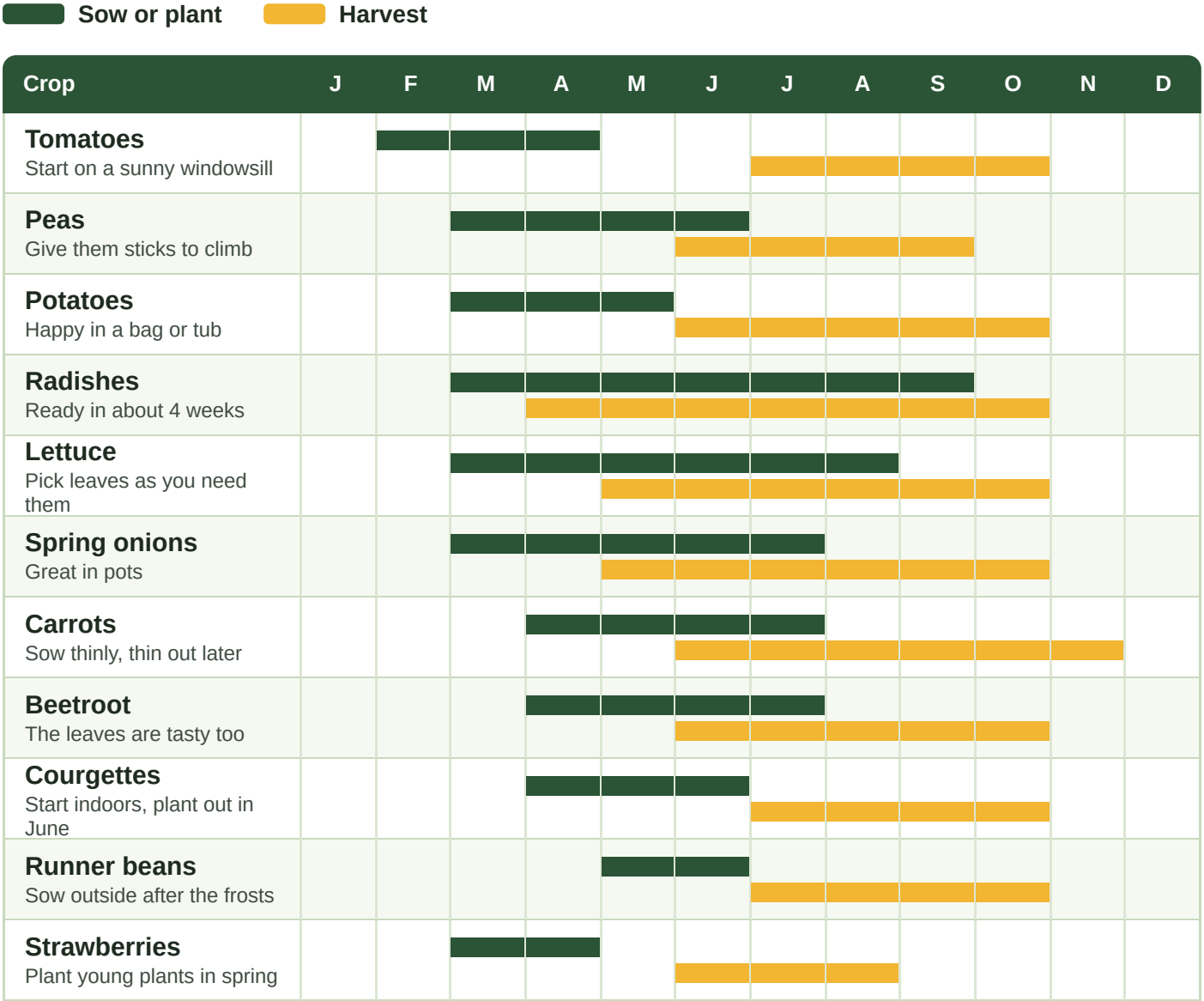
Salty or mouldy food.

No coconut? Tie string round the top of a pine cone, smear on the mixture and roll it in bird seed.

Good to know: fat feeders are best in autumn and winter, as fat goes off in warm weather. Check your bird seed if anyone has a nut allergy, and wash hands when you've finished.

What to Sow When

Eleven easy crops for first-time growers, and when to get them in the ground.



A guide, not a rulebook. These timings suit most of the UK. In colder or northern gardens, start a couple of weeks later.

Watch for frost. Keep tomatoes, courgettes and runner beans indoors or under cover until the last frost has passed.

My Growing Diary

Plant a seed, look after it and record how it grows.

I'm growing _____

I planted it on _____

It lives in a pot / garden / windowsill _____

Week 1

Draw it here

How tall? _____ **cm**

Week 2

Draw it here

How tall? _____ **cm**

Week 3

Draw it here

How tall? _____ **cm**

Week 4

Draw it here

How tall? _____ **cm**

Watering tracker

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Quick growers to try

Cress about 1 week **Pea shoots** 2–3 weeks **Salad leaves** 3–4 weeks **Radishes** about 4 weeks

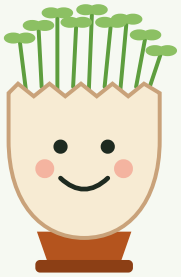
Speedy Seeds Race

Which seed will sprout first? Sow them all on the same day and find out!

Racer's name _____ **Race start date** _____

Seed	My guess 1st to 5th	Date it sprouted	Days it took
Cress Ready to eat in about 1 week			
Mustard Ready to eat in about 1 week			
Pea shoots Ready to eat in 2–3 weeks			
Salad leaves Ready to eat in 3–4 weeks			
Radishes Ready to eat in about 4 weeks			

And the winner is … _____



Bonus: grow a cress head

1. Wash out an empty eggshell or yoghurt pot and draw a funny face on it.
2. Fill it with damp cotton wool or kitchen roll.
3. Sprinkle cress seeds thickly over the top.
4. Put it on a bright windowsill and keep it damp.
5. In about a week, give it a haircut and pop it in a sandwich!

Make it a fair race: use the same kind of pot and compost for every seed, keep them all on the same windowsill and check them every day.

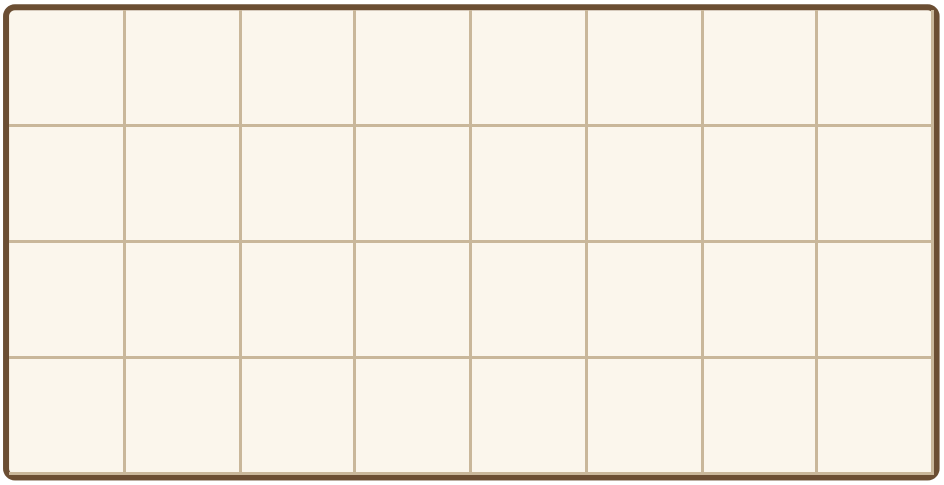
Pea shoot tip: soak the peas in water overnight before you sow them. Dried peas from the supermarket work well.

Plan Your Raised Bed

Raised beds warm up quickly, drain well and are kind to your back. Plan yours on the grid, then get planting.

My bed plan

Each square = 30 x 30cm



Our bed is _____ m long and _____ m wide

Getting it right

Sun: most veg want at least six hours a day.

Width: up to 1.2m, so you can reach the middle from both sides.

Depth: at least 30cm for most veg. Go deeper for carrots, or to save your back.

Paths: wide enough for a wheelbarrow.

Filling: a mix of good topsoil and garden compost.

How many plants per square?

1
Tomatoes, peppers, kale

4
Lettuce, basil, parsley, strawberries

9
Beetroot, spinach, dwarf French beans

16
Carrots, radishes, spring onions

Big plants like courgettes need a block of four squares to themselves.

Bed ideas to borrow

Salad Bar
Lettuce, rocket, radishes, spring onions, cherry tomatoes

Pizza Bed
Tomatoes, basil, oregano, peppers, onions

BBQ Bed
Sweetcorn, courgettes, peppers, rosemary, thyme

Kids' Patch
Strawberries, peas, radishes, dwarf sunflowers, cherry tomatoes

The Evergreen Guide

Evergreens keep the garden alive through winter, give birds somewhere to shelter and look good all year round. Here are some reliable picks for every spot.

For wildlife

Holly *Ilex aquifolium*
Winter berries for birds (on female plants).

Ivy *Hedera helix*
Late flowers for insects, berries for birds.

Firethorn *Pyracantha*
Thorny shelter for nesting birds, plus berries.

Winter flowers and scent

Mahonia *Mahonia x media*
Yellow winter flowers for early bees.

Christmas box *Sarcococca*
Sweet winter scent. Happy in shade.

Laurustinus *Viburnum tinus*
Flowers from late autumn into spring.

For pots and small spaces

Skimmia *Skimmia japonica*
Red buds or berries all winter long.

Hebe *Hebe*
Compact shrub, summer flowers for bees.

Rosemary *Salvia rosmarinus*
Herb with early flowers. Needs sun.

For shady corners

Fatsia *Fatsia japonica*
Big glossy leaves, autumn flowers.

Hart's-tongue fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*
Glossy fronds for damp, shady spots.

Euonymus *Euonymus fortunei*
Tough ground cover. Will climb a wall.

For hedges

Yew *Taxus baccata*
The classic hedge. Poisonous if eaten.

Portuguese laurel *Prunus lusitanica*
Glossy and dense. Clips into neat shapes.

Griselinia *Griselinia littoralis*
Fresh green leaves. Great by the coast.

Instead of box

Box blight and box tree caterpillar have hit box hard. These look similar and clip just as well.

Japanese holly *Ilex crenata*
Small leaves, very box-like.

Box-leaf honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*
Fast-growing and easy to shape.

Euonymus 'Microphyllus' *E. japonicus*
Tiny leaves, slow and very neat.

Planting tips: autumn and spring are the best times to plant. Water well through the first year, especially in dry spells, and check the label for how big it will grow.

Little ones about? Holly berries, ivy and yew are poisonous if eaten.

Lawn Care Calendar

A healthy lawn, season by season. Tick off each job as you go.

Spring — March to May

- [ ] Start mowing once the grass is growing, with the blades on a high setting.
- [ ] Rake out moss and dead grass to let the lawn breathe.
- [ ] Give it a spring lawn feed in April or May.
- [ ] Sow seed on bare patches once the soil is warm and moist.
- [ ] Leave a patch unmown for No Mow May.

Summer — June to August

- [ ] Mow about once a week. Little and often is best.
- [ ] Raise the blades in hot, dry spells.
- [ ] Don't panic if it goes brown in a drought. It greens up again after rain.
- [ ] In dry weather, leave short clippings on the lawn to hold in moisture.
- [ ] Save the watering for new lawns. Established grass copes.

Autumn — September to November

- [ ] The big lawn makeover: rake out thatch, then spike the lawn with a garden fork to let air in.
- [ ] Sow seed over thin areas in September.
- [ ] Use an autumn lawn feed, not a spring one.
- [ ] Rake up fallen leaves and pile them up to make leaf mould.
- [ ] Raise the blades for the last few cuts.

Winter — December to February

- [ ] Keep off the grass when it's frozen or waterlogged.
- [ ] Only mow in mild spells if it's still growing, and keep the blades high.
- [ ] Get the mower serviced and the blades sharpened.
- [ ] Plan any new lawns or borders for spring.

The one-third rule

Never cut off more than a third of the grass height in one go.

Keep blades sharp

Blunt blades tear the grass and leave brown tips.

Mow it dry

Wet grass clumps and tears, so wait for a dry day.

Leave it a bit wild

Mow every few weeks instead of weekly and clover and daisies will flower for bees.

Grow in Small Spaces

No garden? No problem. A balcony, patio, windowsill or front step is plenty of room to grow something delicious.

Easy crops for pots	Pot size	Top tip
Salad leaves	A trough or 20cm pot	Snip what you need and they'll grow back.
Cherry tomatoes	30cm pot or a grow bag	Tumbling types look great in hanging baskets.
Strawberries	20cm pot or a basket	The fruit stays clean and away from slugs.
Herbs	15cm pot each	Give mint a pot of its own, as it spreads.
Chillies	20cm pot	They love a sunny windowsill.
Dwarf French beans	30cm pot	No canes or supports needed.
Radishes	Any pot 15cm deep	Ready in about four weeks.
Potatoes	40-litre potato bag	Plant three seed potatoes per bag.

Which way does your space face?

S
Sun all day
Tomatoes, chillies, rosemary, thyme

W
Afternoon sun
Strawberries, beans, basil

E
Morning sun
Salad leaves, peas, most herbs

N
Mostly shade
Mint, parsley, lettuce, chard

Small space secrets

Go up. Wall planters, hanging baskets and a trellis for climbing beans.

Drainage. Every pot needs holes in the bottom.

Compost. Use a peat-free multipurpose compost.

Feed. Give tomatoes, chillies and strawberries a tomato feed once they flower.

Go big. Larger pots hold more water and dry out less quickly.

Recycle. Old buckets, tins and crates make great pots. Just add holes.

Water. Pots can need watering every day in summer.

Stay safe. Check your balcony's weight limit and secure pots against the wind.