



**Space  
to thrive**

# Nature in your neighbourhood



**Chelmsford**  
City Parks

## What is Space to Thrive?

Chelmsford City Parks look after green spaces across the district, creating wildlife-friendly areas within urban and rural surroundings to give nature space to thrive. These habitats can be found in your local park or even smaller patches of green and roadside verges in your neighbourhood.

By leaving areas of grassland to grow taller, they have the potential to attract native wildflowers, creating a network of ecosystem corridors across our district. These corridors attract pollinators which in turn provides food for mammals and birds in the food chain increasing biodiversity in our city and the surrounding areas.



## Biodiversity explained

Biodiversity means the variety of life within an ecosystem – the many species of plants and animals on Earth and the range of habitats where they live. It also includes the genetic differences within species. Biodiversity includes everything from butterflies and foxes to ancient oak trees, rivers, and wildflower meadows.

Chelmsford may be a growing city, but it still has a surprising amount of wildlife. Our parks, rivers, woodlands, and even urban areas provide homes for a wide range of species. Our green spaces and Local Nature Reserves support everything from birds and bats to wildflowers and insects. Even our gardens and buildings can be important habitats.

## Why is biodiversity important?

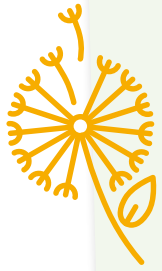
Flora are plants and fauna are animals that are specific to a place or time. The UK has more than 70,000 known species of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms. However, studies indicate that the abundance of our wildlife has declined by 19% since the 1970s (source: The National Biodiversity Network [nbn.org.uk](http://nbn.org.uk)).

All plants and animals rely on each other to survive. The more species we protect, the stronger and healthier our local ecosystem and planet becomes.



Pictured: Common Blue Butterfly





# Why we need wildflowers – and not just the pretty ones!



Wildflowers are essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems. They provide food and shelter for pollinators like bees, butterflies, and other insects, which in turn support birds and other wildlife. Wildflowers also help improve soil health, prevent erosion, and enhance biodiversity by creating habitats for a wide range of species. Additionally, they contribute to climate resilience by absorbing carbon and promoting natural water retention. Without wildflowers, many ecosystems would struggle, leading to a decline in pollinators and a loss of plant and animal diversity.



## Wildflowers are key producers in our food chains



Oxeye Daisy



Honeybee



Honey



Human



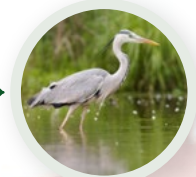
Common Knapweed



Meadow Brown Butterfly



Common Frog



Heron



Wild Carrot



Hoverfly



Garden Spider



Blue Tit



# Exploring Chelmsford's habitats



The Chelmsford district is home to a variety of habitats, each playing a crucial role in supporting wildlife and ecosystems. Many of Chelmsford's parks form mosaic habitats which feature a diverse range of rich habitats linked together.

Chelmsford City Parks, alongside a team of dedicated conservation volunteers and partner organisations, work hard to maintain and develop many of these habitats to give nature the best possible chance to thrive.

## Freshwater

This includes our rivers and ponds. Chelmsford City Parks look after approximately 80 ponds across our district. These habitats support an abundance of life from fish and reptiles to birds and even otters.



## Coastal and Salt Estuaries

South Woodham Ferrers, located along the River Crouch, features diverse coastal habitats that are vital for local wildlife and environmental health. The area includes saltmarshes, mudflats, and intertidal zones, each supporting unique ecosystems.



## Lowland Heath

Heathlands are characterised by open spaces where plants like heather, gorse, and grasses thrive. They are important habitats for various wildlife species, including certain birds, insects, and reptiles. One notable Heathland in Chelmsford is Galleywood Common.



## Other Habitats

The Chelmsford district also has large areas of agroecosystems which support good production systems, and a range of wetlands from small mires or bogs to larger marshes and floodplains which may be covered in water seasonally or permanently.



## Urban

Cities may seem unlikely habitats for wildlife, but parks, gardens, cemeteries, and even rooftops provide homes for foxes, hedgehogs, bats, and pollinators like bees. Green spaces are essential for urban biodiversity.

## Woodlands

An area of land covered by trees. Woodlands and ancient woodlands are home to many plants and animals, which may live in the trees, in rotting or decaying parts of trees, under rocks or stones, or in the ground in burrows.

## Meadows

There are many types of meadow which reflect different local climate conditions like wetland meadows, near water and floodplains, or meadows for wildflowers that prefer drier conditions. Some are perennial – returning year after year, some are annual wildflowers. All support biodiversity creating habitats for the local ecosystem.

## Grasslands

These areas are dominated by grass cover, but they can also contain lots of other plants. They support wildflowers, pollinators, birds and grazing animals.



# The Seasons

Nature must constantly adapt to the changing seasons, with wildlife and plants adjusting to shifts in temperature, food availability, and shelter. Here is what you can do to help nature thrive throughout the year.



**Spring** (March – May)

**Plant for pollinators:** Grow nectar-rich flowers to support bees and butterflies as they emerge.

**Leave nesting spots undisturbed:** Avoid trimming hedges and trees where birds may be nesting.

**Create water sources:** Provide shallow dishes of water for birds, insects, and small mammals.

**Compost start-up:** Begin a compost heap to enrich soil and support worms and microbes.



**Summer** (June – August)

**Provide water in hot weather:** Keep birdbaths and ponds topped up and place small water dishes for hedgehogs.

**Mow less frequently:** Let grass grow longer and allow wildflowers to bloom for pollinators.

**Create shade and shelter:** Leave dense vegetation or log piles for insects and small creatures.

**Choose wildlife-friendly plants:** Grow sunflowers, lavender, and night-scented flowers to attract bees and moths.



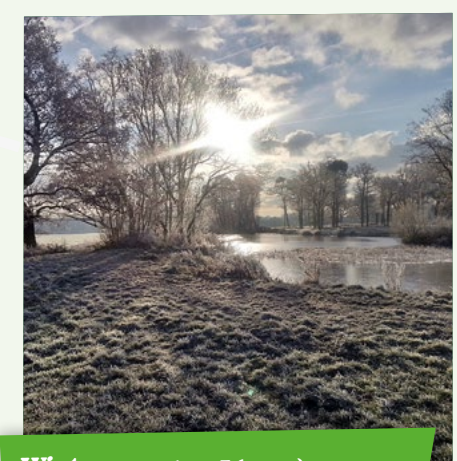
**Autumn** (September – November)

**Don't clear fallen leaves:** Piles of leaves provide shelter for insects and hedgehogs.

**Plant native trees and hedges:** Trees like rowan, hawthorn, and hazel offer food and shelter for birds and mammals.

**Create a wild corner:** Let part of your garden grow wild to provide a habitat for overwintering creatures.

**Check bonfires before lighting:** Piles of wood can be home to hedgehogs and frogs.



**Winter** (December – February)

**Keep seedheads:** As a natural ongoing food source for birds, shelter for hibernating insects and they look great in a frost.

**Break the ice:** Keep a small area of ponds ice-free for wildlife to drink.

**Build or install nesting boxes:** Offer shelter to birds and small mammals preparing for spring.

**Put up bird feeders:** As natural food sources dwindle, offer seeds, suet, and mealworms.



# The mutual benefits of nature



It is crucial that we support nature however, it also gives back to us in many ways. Spending time outdoors boosts our physical health, reduces stress, and improves our mental and emotional well-being.

## **Supports Life & the Environment**

**Provides oxygen** – Trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, keeping our air clean.

**Regulates climate** – Forests, oceans, and wetlands help balance the Earth's temperature and store carbon.

**Purifies water & air** – Natural ecosystems filter pollutants, providing clean water and fresh air.

## **Improves Mental & Physical Health**

**Reduces stress & anxiety** – Time in green spaces helps lower stress levels and improves your mood.

**Boosts immune system** – Exposure to fresh air and sunlight strengthens our body's natural defenses.

**Encourages exercise** – Walking, hiking, and outdoor activities keep us active and healthy.

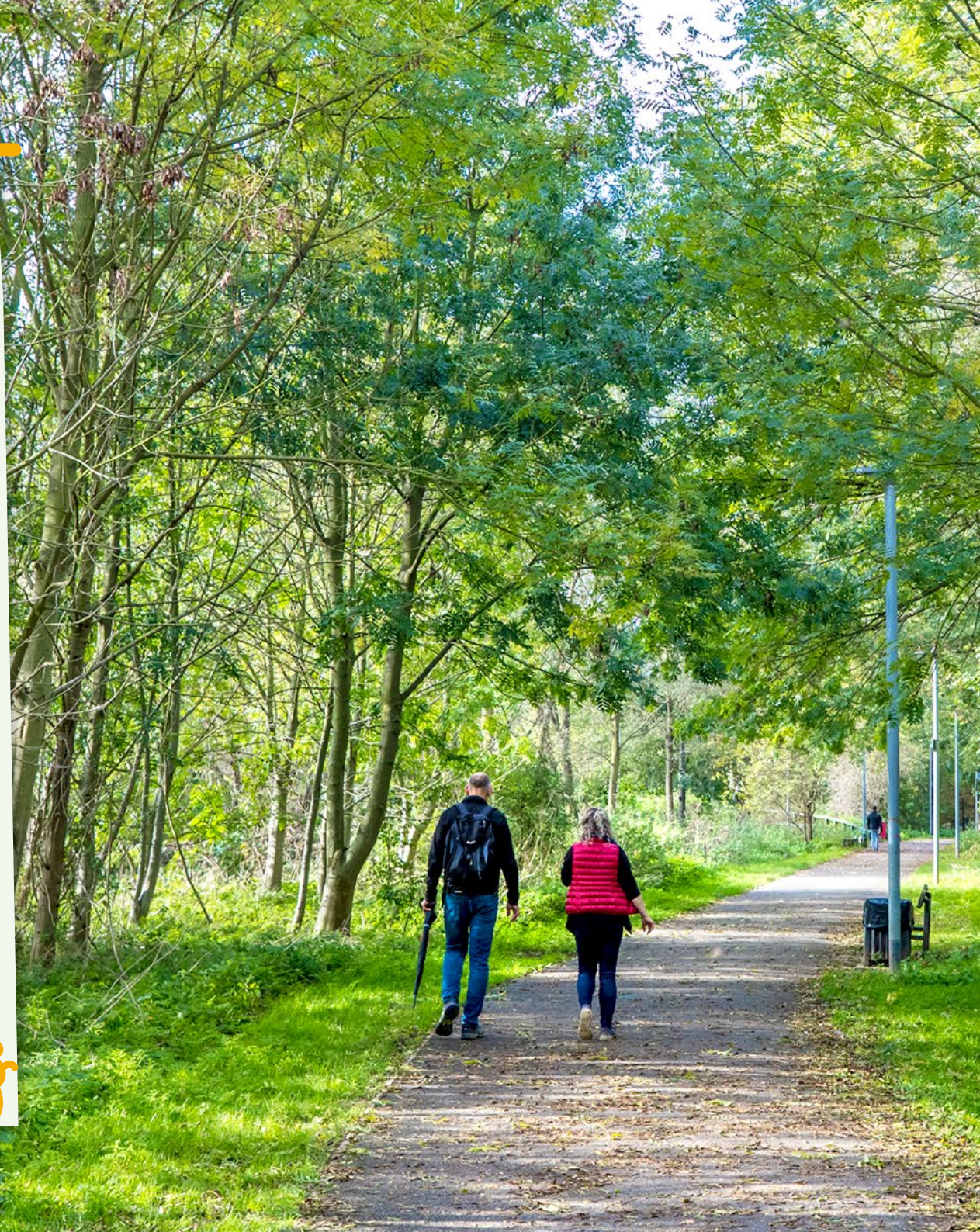
## **Inspires & Connects Us**

**Enhances creativity** – Being in nature sparks new ideas and problem-solving skills.

**Promotes mindfulness** – Spending time outdoors helps us feel connected to the world around us.

**Strengthens communities** – Parks, gardens, and nature reserves bring people together.

By protecting and appreciating nature, we ensure a healthier future for ourselves and the planet.



# How to create a mini habitat for nature at home

Creating a pollinator-friendly pot or window box is a simple and impactful way to help our struggling pollinators if you have limited outside space.

## Materials needed

- Pot or window box with drainage holes
- Multi-purpose peat-free compost
- Pollen and nectar-rich plants e.g. Nepeta and Salvia
- Watering can

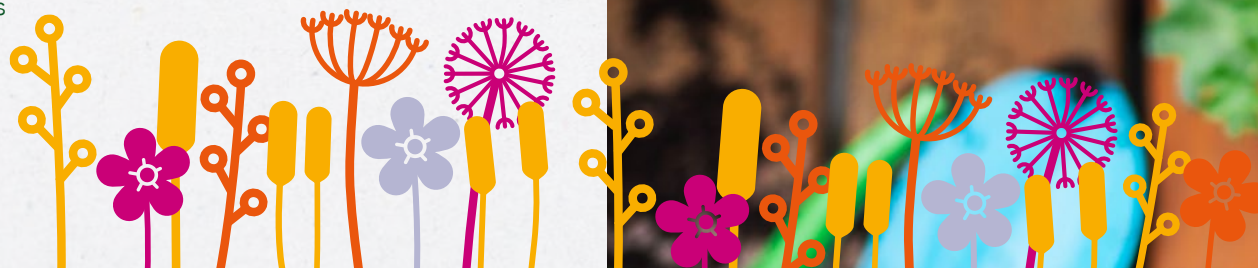


## Instructions

1. **Prepare the container:** place your container in a sunny spot. Fill it two-thirds full with compost.
2. **Arrange the plants:** gently remove the plants from their original pots. Position the tallest plants at the back and shorter ones at the front.
3. **Fill with compost:** add more compost around the plants' root balls, pressing gently until the soil level is a few centimetres below the container's rim.
4. **Water thoroughly:** water the container well to help the plants establish.

## Maintenance tips

- 🕒 Water in early morning or evening, aiming for the soil rather than foliage
- 🕒 Keep the soil moist but not waterlogged
- 🕒 Remove dead flower heads to encourage flowering
- 🕒 Allow leaves to die back naturally, providing winter shelter for insects



# Bring a touch of nature inside your home with these mason jar planters

## Materials needed

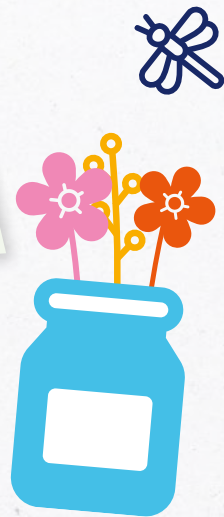
- Mason jar
- Small pebbles or stones
- Potting soil
- Herb or succulent plant
- Decorative elements (e.g. ribbon, twine)

## Instructions

1. **Prepare the jar:** start by placing a 2.5cm layer of small pebbles at the bottom of the mason jar. This layer acts as drainage, preventing water from accumulating at the roots.
2. **Add soil:** fill the jar with potting soil, leaving some space at the top for your plant.
3. **Plant:** if using an established plant, create a small hole in the soil, place the plant inside, and gently pack the soil around it. For seeds, plant them according to the package instructions.
4. **Decorate (optional):** enhance your planter's appearance by tying a ribbon or twine around the jar's neck.

## Maintenance tips

- 📌 Position your jar where it receives the appropriate sunlight for your chosen plant
- 📌 Water sparingly as the pebble layer provides drainage
- 📌 Monitor the soil's moisture and adjust watering as needed



# Explore green spaces

Spending time outdoors isn't just good for your body—it's great for your mind too.

You can find some self-guided walks on our website or just get exploring the green spaces that Chelmsford and South Woodham Ferrers have to offer.




- 1 Admirals Park LNR  & Tower Gardens 
- 2 Andrews Park 
- 3 Baddow Hall Park
- 4 Boleyn Gardens 
- 5 Beaulieu Park Recreation Ground 
- 6 Central Park, Bell Meadow & Sky Blue Pasture 
- 7 Chancellor Park & Brook End Gardens 
- 8 Chelmer Park 
- 9 Chelmer Valley LNR 
- 10 Coronation Park 
- 11 Frankland Fields LNR 
- 12 Galleywood Common LNR 
- 13 Hylands Park 
- 14 John Shennan Field LNR 
- 15 Jubilee Park 
- 16 Lionmede Recreation Ground 
- 17 Marconi Ponds LNR 
- 18 Melbourne Park 
- 19 Noakes Park
- 20 Oaklands Park 
- 21 Pollards Meadow
- 22 Saltcoats Park & Compass Gardens 
- 23 Springfield Green
- 24 Springfield Hall Park 

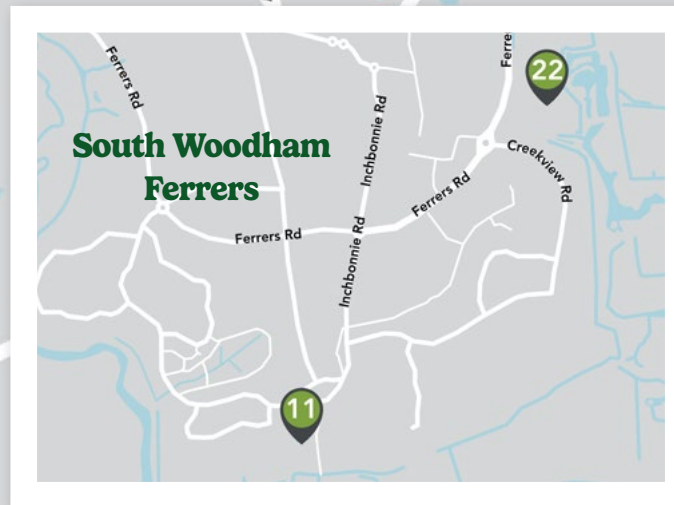


[loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/green-spaces](http://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/green-spaces)



## Key

-  Chelmsford City Council Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
-  Chelmsford City Council parks with Green Flag Status
-  Chelmsford City Council parks with Green Heritage Status





Find out how you can make  
a difference locally

[loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/volunteer](https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/volunteer)



Discover the latest information  
from City Parks

-  Sign up to volunteer
-  Subscribe to our newsletter
-  More about Space to Thrive



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