

Helping Hedgehogs in Autumn and Winter



Autumn is a vital time for hedgehogs, who need to build up fat reserves to see them safely through the Winter ahead. Babies are also still being born in Autumn and they face a race against time to get up to weight. Hedgehogs ideally need to be a minimum of 600g to survive hibernation – around the size of a grapefruit.

You can help give hedgehogs the best chance in Autumn by:

- Leaving out plenty of shallow bowls of water (year round).
- Leaving out food well into Winter. Any cat or kitten biscuit is great and any meaty cat or dog food.
- Building a hedgehog feeding station to keep hedgehog food dry and cats out.
- Providing a hibernation nest box in a quiet wilder part of the garden. Use Dust Extracted Barley Straw in the box. You can also leave some around your garden under something to keep it dry. Hedgehogs will add more to their nests by themselves.

- Avoiding the urge to clear away fallen leaves – they are used by hedgehogs for their nests. Plant stems are also vital habitats for insects sheltering over Winter.
- Always moving any bonfires on the day of the bonfire and checking carefully for sleeping hedgehogs.
- Checking very carefully before doing any gardening activity like strimming, digging out plants (which may be sheltering a nest), forking compost heaps or moving structures like sheds that they may be nesting under

Hedgehogs are nocturnal and being out in the day is 99% of the time not okay. Wear gloves and contain the hedgehog in a high-sided box whilst you seek urgent advice from a hedgehog rescue.

The sooner you seek help, the greater the chance of the hedgehog surviving.

You will find more tips for making your garden hedgehog friendly and how to help hedgehogs in Autumn and Winter at www.littlesilverhedgehog.com. The site also has helpful lists of hedgehog rescues and more advice on caring for our spiky friends. You can also visit www.yorkshirehedgehogs.co.uk

Emma Farley runs the Little Silver Hedgehog Rescue, Burnby, East Yorkshire. All wildlife rescues are voluntary and self-funded. Donations are always welcome.