

HEDGEHOGS

Q: "Why did the hedgehog cross the road?"

A: "To see it's flatmate"

I'm not sure many kids these days would get that joke, as it's very rare you see squashed hedgehogs on the road at present. Of course, that's not because they've taken a great evolutionary leap forward and started looking right and left before they cross the road or started wearing hi-vis jackets, but sadly because their numbers have drastically reduced – in fact, the amount of hedgehogs in the UK has apparently dropped by a third since the millennium.

The organisation **Hedgehog Street** offers a range of tips for encouraging hedgehogs into your garden, top of which is to dig or cut a CD case-sized hole under or through the bottom of your fence so that our spiky friends can travel between gardens safely without having to venture on roads. Other advice is to keep part of your garden 'wild' to attract bugs for them to feast on, make sure that garden ponds have a ramp so that they hedgehog doesn't drown, stop using chemicals on your garden, check under hedges before strimming and be careful before lighting autumn bonfires.

We've been feeding 'our' hedgehog for nearly three years. We've found that it's best to store a bowl of dried cat food in our special hedgehog feeding station which I bought from Restore in Manzil Way off Cowley Road – they can make bespoke orders very cheaply if you contact them. However, equally anything that's safe from the elements and small enough that a hedgehog can get in and not a cat or fox is good, even if it's just made out of bricks or breezeblocks with a plank of wood for the roof. Or there's also Ebay etc. Also make sure you top up a bowl of water as hedgehogs can get thirsty after gobbling up all that cat food.



We bought the hedgehog house (pictured) from a garden centre and filled it with straw and hay – after studiously ignoring it for two years, we now have an inhabitant! We've placed it somewhere quiet and out-the-way. Our guest is still feeding at present and not hibernating, but with weather patterns so unpredictable thanks to climate change, it's worth topping up the food bowl during

the winter if the weather turns mild and your spiky friend wakes up.

If you'd like to get involved or know more, please look up <https://www.hedgeox.org/> or www.hedgehogstreet.org