Hedgehog Highways

Turning Gardens into Wildlife Corridors



What they are, why they matter and how to create one in your neighbourhood.

What is a Hedgehog Highway?

‘*No one garden can provide everything a hedgehog needs*.’
(The National Biodiversity Data Centre)

Hedgehogs roam up to 2 km in a single night searching for food, mates and nesting sites. Each hedgehog may use several nests for resting during the day. However, solid fences and walls can prevent them from moving freely between gardens.

A Hedgehog Highway is a small gap or tunnel that connects gardens, allowing hedgehogs to move safely between green spaces.

Just a 13 x 13 cm hole (about the size of a CD case) can reconnect habitats and help hedgehogs survive in towns and suburbs.







Source: Hedgehog Street

Why Hedgehog Highways Matter

Hedgehogs need connected gardens.

Hedgehog populations have declined in many parts of Europe. In 2024, the European hedgehog was classified as Near Threatened on the global IUCN Red List, reflecting concerns about its declining population.

Causes of the decline in hedgehog numbers:

- Habitat loss
- Road deaths
- Fenced-off gardens
- Declining insect populations
- Changes in farming practices, including pesticide use and hedgerow removal.

Gardens can become mini wildlife reserves, but only if hedgehogs can get in and out. Connecting gardens through small access points creates a network of wildlife corridors across neighbourhoods.



How to Create a Hedgehog Highway

How to Build One (It’s Very Easy)

1️⃣ Cut a 13 x 13 cm opening at the base of a fence
2️⃣ Smooth the edges so hedgehogs won’t be injured
3️⃣ Keep the opening clear of plants and other obstacles
4️⃣ Encourage neighbours to connect their gardens too.

You can also add a small Hedgehog Highway sign so the opening isn't accidentally blocked.



Source: Hedgehog Street

Important: Check for pipes, cables and other hazards before cutting. Don't cut into walls or shared boundaries without the necessary permission.

Where to Create Access Points

Best Places to Add Hedgehog Access

Look for natural boundaries between gardens:

- At the base of wooden fences
- Under garden gates
- Through hedges
- Small tunnels under walls or gravel boards
- Between front and back gardens

Tip: Choose routes that connect gardens and green spaces without directing hedgehogs towards busy roads. Creating an opening beneath an existing gate may be easier than cutting into a fence.



Source: Hedgehog Street

Could Your Street Become a Hedgehog Highway?

The campaign Hedgehog Street, run by the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, has recruited over 134,000 volunteer "Hedgehog Champions", helping create highways across Britain.

Many councils and housing developers now include hedgehog gaps in new developments to reconnect habitats.

Why not start something similar in your neighbourhood? Talk to your neighbours about creating small openings between gardens.



Making Your Garden Hedgehog-Friendly

Once hedgehogs can enter your garden:

- Leave a wild corner, log pile, or area with longer grass
- Provide a shallow dish of water
- Make ponds safe by providing a gently sloping edge or escape ramp so hedgehogs and other wildlife can climb out.
- Avoid using slug pellets – hedgehogs can die from eating them
- Avoid pesticides and weedkillers, which can harm wildlife and reduce the insects hedgehogs depend on for food.
- Add a hedgehog house or leaf pile
- Grow wildlife-friendly plants that attract insects such as beetles, earwigs, worms and caterpillars – these are food sources for hedgehogs
- Check long grass, leaf piles and compost heaps before strimming or disturbing them.
- Check bonfires before lighting them.







A Safe Place to Hibernate

Give Hedgehogs a Home This Winter

As temperatures drop, hedgehogs begin preparing for hibernation. In Ireland, they typically hibernate between November and March, although the timing varies depending on weather conditions.

You can help by creating a safe, sheltered space in your garden.

- Leave a wild corner: Piles of dry leaves, logs and twigs provide natural nesting materials and shelter.
- Build a hedgehog house: Place it in a quiet, sheltered spot, away from disturbance.
- Leave some areas undisturbed: Avoid clearing leaf piles or cutting back dense vegetation during winter.
- Check before gardening: Hedgehogs may be sleeping beneath leaves, compost heaps or garden debris.
- Provide fresh water: A shallow dish of water can help hedgehogs that remain active during milder weather.



Sources for further information: National Biodiversity Data Centre and British Hedgehog Preservation Society

David Attenborough Explains

David Attenborough highlights how small actions like hedgehog highways help wildlife move through urban landscapes.



Green Fridays Takeaway

Sometimes making space for nature requires only a small change.

A gap in a fence might seem insignificant, but for a hedgehog, it can open up access to food, shelter and neighbouring habitats.

By connecting our gardens, leaving a few wild corners and making small changes to how we manage our outdoor spaces, we can help wildlife thrive.



Learn more, explore the sources and discover practical ways to help at GreenFridays.org/learn.

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