



Hedgehog Welfare

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How to make a Hedgehog Box for your Garden

Take a thick cardboard box, minimum 30cm but not more than 45cm square or oblong, if possible a box that opens from the top rather than the side. Ask an adult to help you cut a 10cm hole, as near as possible to one of the bottom-side corners of the box, this is where the hedgehog can go in and out of the box.

In the bottom of the box you want to place several sheets of newspaper, so the box does not get cold from underneath but remember the hedgehog does need to get in and out of the hole you have just made, about 8-10 sheets is about right.

You then want to go into the garden and find some dry/crisp leaves (or buy some hay, most pet shops sell this in small bags for rabbits, etc.) If you want you can make your own hay by picking some long grass and letting it dry in the sun. Turning it once or twice but remember to take it in and store it in a paper sack or cardboard box, (not a plastic carriage bag) before the damp nights start or rain makes it wet again. If you cannot buy or make hay or find any dry leaves, you can use long stripes of newspaper. A mixture of dry leaves, hay and newspaper stripes is what is best for the hedgehog. Only fill the box about two-third full, do not press it down too much, so the hedgehog can bring in their own nest material and make this their own home.

To keep the box dry all winter, while he sleeps during the very cold months (this long sleep is called hibernation). Cover the box in thick plastic (perhaps a bin liner) and stick it down with some tape, if possible waterproof tape. Again ask an adult to help cut another 10cm hole to match the where you have cut one in the box. If you do this carefully you can make a neat hole and stick the plastic round the hole on the inside so the edges of the cardboard are not showing and therefore get wet when it rains or snows.

You have now made a good hedgehog house; you will want to place this under some brambles, hedge or bush, so that it will remain in place when it is windy. Try to place the entrance of the box so it is protected from the driving rain and cold winds. Remember this needs to be in an area of the garden when you will not need to move the box until next year or even longer.

So you can tell if a hedgehog is using the box without disturbing the hedgehog inside the box, you can either put some sand about 3cm deep and about 10-15cm wide in front of the box. Make it really flat and pat it down well and you will then be able to see foot prints of the hedgehog going in and out of the box. If you do not have any sand you can put a tissue just inside the hole cross the entrance, place it so it is only just inside. When you check the box you will be able to see the tissue pushed in if the hedgehog is in the box and if he has come out again the tissue will be outside the box. You will need to do this every time you check the box but remember not to disturb the box while you are doing this. Remember not to go near the box for a few days so the hedgehog gets to know about the box. Also in the spring remember to check the box is empty before you throw it away. If you take the plastic off the box, in the late spring, you could put the box in your compost heap to rot away.

You can also help the hedgehogs by leaving out water in a cat or dog bowl, remember to check the water and bowl are clean every day. You can also leave out food, cat or dog food or special hedgehog biscuits (do not feed dried cat unless it is lams or dog food) see other leaflet for more details on this.

Hedgehog Welfare also uses these boxes as release boxes.