Action Plan Scope:

This Action Plan covers gardens and allotments as well as areas of garden created within school and community grounds. These artificial habitats can often be a haven for wildlife, particularly in urban areas. All gardens and allotments have the potential to be informal nature reserves, however small, and the planting of nectar rich plants, creation of log piles, and other initiatives can play a significant role in supporting and enhancing local biodiversity. In addition, gardens are a habitat where many people can come into direct contact with wildlife, appreciate the diversity of wildlife in their own gardens, and also help the wildlife themselves. While gardens are usually used for growing flowers, fruits or vegetables and as a place of recreation, they can also include areas with features from other habitats (including meadow, woodland, heathland and pond) and can support a number of nationally declining species such as song thrush, pipistrelle bats, hedgehogs, frogs and toads.

1. CURRENT STATUS

1.1 Legislation and priority status

International Habitats Directive^a (Annex II)
UK and Wales Town and Country Planning Act 1990^b

Forestry Act 1967°

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981d

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000e

Gwynedd None identified

1.2 Status in Wales and beyond

Gardens are widespread throughout Britain, covering approximately 3% of the land area in England and Wales. In Wales, the area of garden habitat amounts to over 40,000 hectares¹ therefore the potential benefit for wildlife, from gardening with conservation in mind, is great. Gardens are found in both urban and rural areas of Wales and, in both cases, gardens can be a haven for wildlife by providing food or shelter in an otherwise urbanised or agriculturally intensive environment. With more than 80% of Wales' population now living in urban areas, gardening is also seen as the best way of connecting people to their local wildlife.

1.3 Status in Gwynedd^f

The extent of garden habitat within Gwynedd is currently unknown but is likely to be well over 2000ha - greater than the amount of many Priority habitats in Gwynedd e.g. lowland heathland (1400 ha). Gardens are therefore likely to be very important for local wildlife in Gwynedd.

f Within this document the term "Gwynedd" refers to areas outside the Snowdonia National Park area, except where specified otherwise.



^a Bats are protected by the Habitat Regulations: Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna.

^b Some trees may be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 197-214, implemented by the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999).

^c Felling of trees (more than 5 cubic metres content per calendar quarter) requires a felling licence under the Forestry Act 1967 (however, trees specifically in gardens are exempt from felling licence requirements)

^d Individual species, including nesting birds, bats and badgers are protected under this Act.

^e Individual species, including bats and badgers are protected under this Act.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING THIS HABITAT (AND ITS ASSOCIATED WILDLIFE) IN GWYNEDD

- Lack of provision of garden space with new houses.
- Loss of garden space on front gardens to hard-surfacing (e.g. for parking and to minimise mowing) and on large back gardens to hard landscaping (e.g. decking) or housing development.
- Use of garden chemicals and slug pellets
- Decline in growing of fruit and vegetable in favour of more ornamental non-native shrubs and a
 desire for tidiness (lack of wild corners, regularly mown lawns, removal of dead wood, less
 compost heaps).
- Introduction of some non-native plants, especially into garden ponds e.g. floating pennywort Hydrocotyle ranunculoides and Australian swamp stonecrop Crassula helmsii are garden escapes which have invaded many town and countryside ponds, lakes and rivers and both now threaten local habitats and species.
- Use of peat cut from wetland habitats peat-free compost is a suitable alternative.
- Cat predation on birds and other species.

3. ASSOCIATED GWYNEDD SAPS / HAPS

Lowland meadows and pasture, River corridors, Wetlands, Invasive plants.

Lesser horseshoe bats, Barn owl, Adder, Hornet robberfly, Waxcaps

4. CURRENT ACTION IN GWYNEDD

4.1 Site and habitat protection

- Gardens have no legal protection although trees are protected in conservation areas and through Tree Preservation Orders.
- Individual species (including great crested newts, bats and badgers) may be protected under various legislations (see section 1.1).
- Gwynedd Council guidelines for new Social Housing developments encourage a garden area of 40m² for houses and 30m² for bungalows.

4.2 Management and programmes of action

- The Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening Partnership (made up of local authorities, statutory bodies, academic institutions, members of the horticulture profession, voluntary organisations and community groups) promotes wildlife gardening in northwest Wales. Supporting a full-time officer, the Partnership gives practical advice on wildlife gardening in private gardens as well as on community, school and business grounds. The distribution of the Partnership's leaflets, and the annual 'Wildlife Gardening Competition', both raise awareness of the importance of gardening for wildlife.
- Many private gardens and allotments are managed with conservation in mind e.g. by erecting bird/bat boxes, planting native trees and shrubs, composting and managing areas as meadows.
- Gwynedd Council's Green Schools scheme assists schools in adopting environmentally friendly policies and activities that include managing school grounds for the benefit of wildlife. The scheme has 3 levels: a bronze, silver and a gold award each with their specific requirements for their attainment e.g. silver requires the design of a wildlife garden while gold requires the development of this wildlife garden design.

- Eco-Schools Wales (supported by a wide variety of partners including Waste Awareness Wales, Foundation for Environmental Education, CCW and WAG) is a programme helping schools to adopt more sustainable practices. As an award scheme programme, the requirement of Eco-Schools includes the wildlife-friendly design, development and management of schools grounds.
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) provides practical assistance and advice for community projects (including community and school gardens), always with conservation in mind.
- Gwynedd Council provide free compost bins to the public.
- CCW's Plant for Wildlife campaign encourages people to "go out to their garden and plant for wildlife". Its aim is to help people get more pleasure from their gardens by bringing wildlife into them.
- RSPB have a free 32-page booklet "The birds in your garden" which gives tips and advice on attracting birds to gardens.
- The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society have a web page (www.wildaboutgardening.org) that gives advice on wildlife friendly gardening.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

• Green Schools and Eco-Schools schemes encourage children to record and monitor wildlife on their school ground/garden.

5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 1. To raise awareness of the importance and value of gardens for biodiversity
- 2. To improve the quality of gardens, allotments and school/community grounds for wildlife
- 3. To improve knowledge of the wildlife using or residing in gardens
- 4. To raise awareness of the wider impacts that gardening practices can have on biodiversity

6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Code	Action	Partner(s) ⁹	
Policy and legislation			
1	Through the relevant legislation, ensure trees in conservation areas and/or those covered by TPOs are protected from development TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC	
2	Through the planning process, aim to protect allotments and school or community grounds from development TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC	
Specie	s / habitat management and protection		
3	Provide practical and/or advisory assistance to schools in designing and/or restoring wildlife-friendly gardens on their grounds TARGET/TIMESCALE: 3 school projects to be completed, By 2008	GC, SWGP, CCW, BTCV, NWWT	
4	Provide practical and/or advisory assistance to community groups in designing and/or restoring wildlife-friendly gardens TARGET/TIMESCALE: 3 community projects to be completed, By 2008	SWGP	

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⁹ Lead partner for this action is indicated by bold typeface, see section 7.2 for explanation of abbreviations

Advisory		
5	Provide and collate best practice advice on wildlife-friendly gardening to the general public, gardeners, schools and community groups TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	SWGP, CCW, GC, BTCV, NWWT
Surve	y, research and monitoring	
6	Promote the recording and monitoring of wildlife on school grounds/gardens by schoolchildren through the Green Schools/Eco-Schools scheme TARGET/TIMESCALE: 15 schools, By 2008	GC
7	Encourage private gardeners to record/observe wildlife in their gardens through preparation of a recording form and encouraging records to be passed to GC TARGET/TIMESCALE: 50 wildlife records, by 2010	SWGP, GC, CCW, NWWT, RSPB
Comm	unications and publicity	
8	Promote the adoption of the Green Schools scheme among Gwynedd schools and where already adopted, encourage progression from bronze and silver to the gold awards TARGET/TIMESCALE: 6 schools to achieve gold status, 16 schools to achieve silver and 24 schools to achieve bronze, By 2008	GC
9	Promote the adoption of the Eco-Schools scheme and encourage progression from bronze and silver to the green flag award TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC
10	Raise awareness of the importance of gardens for biodiversity by distributing leaflets, giving talks and organising open days at existing wildlife gardens TARGET/TIMESCALE: 10 talks, By 2007	SWGP, GC, CCW, NWWT, RSPB
11	Promote the use of peat alternatives and peat free compost through distribution of leaflets and submission of occasional press releases to local newspapers TARGET/TIMESCALE: 2 press releases, By 2008	GC, SWGP, CCW, NWWT
12	Continue to promote and offer free compost bins to Gwynedd residents TARGET/TIMESCALE: 1000 compost bins to be provided per year, Until 2008	GC
13	Hold wildlife gardening promotional/demonstration events, involving sympathetic local garden centres and popular gardens open to the public TARGET/TIMESCALE: 2 demonstrational events, By 2008	GC, SWGP, BTCV
14	Promote the stocking of native plants at garden centres, and urge centres to stop stocking potentially invasive non-native plants TARGET/TIMESCALE: 3 garden centres on board, By 2008	CCW, SWGP, GC, EAW, NWWT

7. PARTNERS & OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 Overall lead partner for HAP

Gwynedd Council (GC)

Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening Partnership (SWGP)

7.2 Key partners

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

BTCV Cymru

North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)

RSPB Cymru

Environment Agency Wales (EAW)

Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)

7.3 Opportunities

General public, Schools, Community groups

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Line drawings: English Nature

9. ABBREVIATIONS

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan, HAP: Habitat Action Plan, LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan, SAP: Species Action Plan, NGIP: Natur Gwynedd Implementation Project, TPO: Tree Preservation Order, GSS: Green Schools Scheme.

Version 1, 2006

¹ Williams, A, 2005. Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening Project. Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening Partnership.