



## **Sustainability Statement**

The life blood of the National Garden Scheme - and its primary resource - is an extensive community of thousands of garden owners. They are uniquely representative of garden owners and keen gardeners all over the country and they have the potential to enable the National Garden Scheme to make an important contribution to the promotion of sustainability.

The National Garden Scheme is committed to activating and advocating sustainability in all areas of our lives, but particularly in gardening. We urge everyone who opens their garden in support of the National Garden Scheme, or who visits these gardens, to garden sustainably. Sustainable gardening can make a substantial contribution to the wider challenges of climate change and biodiversity.

We will use videos and other communications material to encourage lively discussion and idea swapping within the community of our garden owners, visitors and other supporters on the broad subject of how to garden more sustainably. We are confident this will raise awareness of major issues – such as peat-based compost – at the same time as tapping into individual gardeners’ passion around the subject of sustainability and giving real life examples of how to be successful in your own private garden, no matter its size.

This Sustainability Statement highlights key areas with our recommendations on each for gardeners and links to articles and information on the National Garden Scheme website.

### **1. Peat**

Historically gardening and horticulture have been major users of peat as a growing medium. Britain has some of the most extensive peatlands in the world and they are the planet’s largest terrestrial carbon store, helping to counteract climate change. Over extraction has decimated many peatlands and so it is imperative that the demand is diminished and then cut off as swiftly as possible. Only then can our peatlands be restored over time and their unique contribution as a major carbon store for the planet built up once again.

We advocate that gardeners should move to peat-free gardening in line with the horticultural industry and other bodies who aim to be peat-free by 2025. This means not buying plants whose growing media contains peat and not buying soil enhancers or growing media, for instance for containers and greenhouses, which contain peat.

[Article: Go peat-free in your garden](#) written with our partners [WWT](#)

### **2. Pesticides**

Avoiding the use of pesticides provides an instant and substantial boost to biodiversity in your garden, encouraging natural predators to control gardeners’ enemies and diminishing the impact that neonicotinoids and other pesticides have on wider ecosystems and the natural environment. Over a period of time pesticides have had a dramatic impact on bees and other natural pollinators; their revival will only happen with the reduction and, wherever possible cessation, in the use of pesticides and we urge all gardeners to take part.

[Article: Gardens for people and wildlife](#)

[Article: Become a greener gardener with Yeo Valley Organic’s tips on putting nature first](#)

### **3. Water**

Sensible use of water should become an increasing priority for all gardeners. This should include reducing the quantity of water used in a garden and capturing as much rainwater as possible for use, thereby moving to the use of naturally provided water rather than water from a tap. Even the smallest of gardens benefit from a rainwater butt or other water storage unit and water storage should become a key priority for the owners of gardens of all sizes.

[Our partnership with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust \(WWT\)](#) is helping to raise awareness of the importance of water on a global and local level. Our first joint online talk in 2022 was '[Wetlands, Water and Our Gardens](#)' and in 2023 the subject is '[Water security and drought resistant planting](#)'

### **4. Plastic and other waste**

Plastic has become an indispensable part of gardening -plant pots and seed trays for instance - indestructible, cheap, light and convenient as it is. But it is one of the world's most pernicious polluters that spreads through our ecosystems and takes hundreds of years to break down. At the National Garden Scheme we urge all gardeners to reduce and where possible eliminate their use of plastic and turn to more sustainable alternatives such as wood and paper. Plant pots can be made of biodegradable material, seed trays can be wooden, and plastic should be eliminated from plant labelling, string and netting.

Gardening produces a lot of waste, much of which can end up in land fill. We advocate that all gardeners reduce their production of waste and at the same time conscious aim to recycle, reuse or, with green waste, always compost. Equally important, the sustainable composting of brown waste that is predominantly carbon-based ensures the return of carbon to the carbon cycle.

### **5. Biodiversity**

We encourage all gardeners to be conscious of the benefits of biodiversity in their garden and to encourage it wherever possible. Allowing biodiversity to influence your choice of plants helps to sustain and safeguard threatened plant species and encourages a wide range of wildlife – some of which is also under threat.

Our series of online talks included '[Great Dixter – biodiversity in abundance](#)' and '[The Sheffield School approach to sustainable planting](#)'

An overarching article on sustainability along with top tips on gardening sustainably, written by National Garden Scheme Trustee, Arit Anderson is shared on our website and across our communication channels: [Sustainability in our gardens: creating a rich tapestry of life](#)

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