

Introduction

To some people the thought of snakes and lizards visiting their garden is not appealing; to others it would be a privilege. If you fall into the latter category, or are willing to be persuaded, then read on to discover how to make your garden reptile-friendly.



Grass snake

Did you know...?

- Grass snakes can swim well, feed mainly on fish and amphibians, and can remain underwater for over half an hour.
- When attacked by a predator, slow worms, like other lizards, will discard their tails, hoping to escape while the predator is distracted by the still wriggling tail.



Common lizard - without tail

This leaflet will...

Give you top tips on how to manage your garden for the benefit of reptiles.

How to attract reptiles to your garden...

The ingredients for the ideal reptile 'des res'

Unless you live adjacent to an area of suitable wild habitat you are unlikely to attract reptiles to your garden. However, if you live next to a wood, heath or wetland then there is a very good chance that reptiles will visit. Indeed, your garden could well form an important wildlife corridor providing a means of access from one habitat to another.

Log pile

Sheltered, moist and full of food – the 5 star restaurant of the reptile world. Create a log pile in a secluded, shaded spot, such as under a hedge, and reptiles may use this as a hunting area or for hibernation. The log pile should be in contact with the soil allowing it to remain damp underneath – try half-burying some logs in the ground at the base of your pile. This will become a home for many species of invertebrate, amphibians and small mammals – perfect hunting ground for snakes and lizards!



Create a compost heap

Warm, humid and secluded – the perfect spot for hunting a meal or for laying eggs. Not only is an open compost heap an environmentally friendly way of recycling but you may also attract slow worms to hunt slugs, worms and other slow moving invertebrates. Grass snakes will also lay their eggs in compost heaps where the warmth generated by decomposing material provides an ideal micro-climate for incubation.



Slow worm

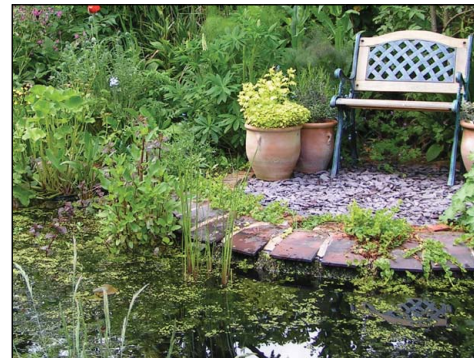
Quiet areas

Reptiles do not like being disturbed and it is very important that they have quiet areas where they can bask, hunt and breed. By creating an area of rough grassland, or perhaps a wildflower meadow, you will benefit much other wildlife.



Pond

A fantastic wildlife resource in its own right, a garden pond will also provide a potential hunting zone for grass snakes, which sometimes take frogs and toads. Don't worry, they will only eat a small proportion of your resident amphibians.



Basking areas

These provide vital areas for reptiles to warm up on chilly Norfolk spring mornings. Reptiles are cold-blooded creatures and need to obtain warmth directly from the sun. Try putting a sheet of corrugated iron in a secluded but open spot, such as amongst an area of rough grass. This will allow reptiles to crawl underneath and warm up much more quickly. Bare areas of soil, bare walls, stone piles, exposed fence posts or tree stumps may also be used by basking common lizards.



Adder

Frequently asked questions

Are Norfolk snakes poisonous?

The adder is the only venomous snake that can be found in Norfolk. They are shy and retiring and quickly move away from any human disturbance. Adders will usually only bite if an attempt is made to pick them up. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to kill, harm or injure them or to sell or trade them in any way.

How do I see reptiles in Norfolk?

The best way is to join one of the special guided walks organised by Norfolk Wildlife Trust or the Norfolk Amphibian and Reptile Group. These walks will take you to the best sites for reptile spotting within the county. Good sites include the heathland areas of north and north-west Norfolk including NWT Roydon Common and the dune systems of north-east Norfolk between Waxham and Winterton. Grass snakes, adders and common lizards also occur in Broadland. Nature reserves such as NWT Upton and Hickling Broad are good sites.

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Grass snake

To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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Protecting **Norfolk's Wildlife** for the Future