



HEDGEHOG NESTS

During the daytime hedgehogs need somewhere safe to sleep, and over winter when they hibernate they make an even warmer nest called a hibernacula.



Natural nests can range in size and are made under sheds, shrubs and bushes, piles of leaves and logs, compost and even rubbish heaps. They will use natural materials such as grass, moss, straw, plants, leaves, and all sorts of garden debris to build their nests. They will pull all this material into their nest to make it warm and cosy. You can help them in your garden by leaving some nice thick dense undergrowth, piles of leaves, and grass at different lengths.

If you think there's not enough natural material or overgrown areas for a hedgehog to make a home themselves in your garden, you can help by providing a ready-made home for them. See the next page on Hedgehog Homes for some tips and ideas!

HIBERNATION

When it gets cold, typically during the months of November to April, hedgehogs go into a state of hibernation. This is not simply a long sleep! During hibernation their metabolism slows and their body temperature drops from a normal 35°C, to about 10°C. They go from having around 190 heartbeats per minute to only around 20 per minute, and they take just one breath every 2 minutes! All this helps the hedgehog save energy and 'skip' over the cold months which often do not have enough natural food around for them to eat.



As they sense the temperatures dropping to near freezing, they will make a dense nest, packing themselves into an almost impenetrable ball of nesting material. This provides excellent insulation against the cold and a safe space for them to hibernate. It is quite normal for a hedgehog to wake up multiple times throughout the winter, grab a quick drink and a snack, remake their nest, and resume hibernation.

Shepreth Hedgehog Hospital

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HEDGEHOG HOUSES

If you would like to provide a hedgehog house in your garden, you can buy one or make your own!

FEATURES OF A GOOD HEDGEHOG HOUSE

Waterproof design - if using wood make sure it is untreated.

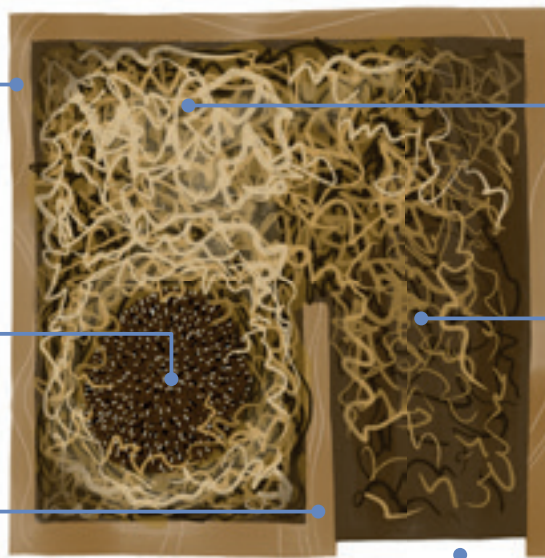
The sleeping area should be around 30cm wide, 40cm long, and 30cm high. This means they can turn around easily in the compartment, but also be able to stuff it full of bedding to keep them warm.

Instead of a tunnel you can add an internal corridor which the hedgehog walks down and around into the sleeping area. This prevents other animals from disturbing the hedgehog whilst it sleeps.

Hay, straw, and dried leaves are all good options as bedding for your hedgehog house.

Provide some extra bedding in the corridor or just outside the house and you can watch them drag mouthfuls of it in to make their nest!

To avoid the cold winter winds, make sure the tunnel does not face North or North East.



Pop your new hedgehog home in a sheltered, quiet area, and if you provide food make sure it is a little distance away from the house to avoid attracting pests near your hedgehogs sleeping zone.

Here are some examples of hedgehog houses that have very happy residents!



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