

Shining example of species protection

3 March was "*World Wildlife Day*" (*UN World Wildlife Day*). This was introduced in 1973 as part of the Washington Convention on *International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (*CITES*). This agreement protects endangered wild species (animals and plants).

CITES primarily protects endangered species from trade and regulates their keeping and breeding. However, the intention of protecting endangered animals and plants from extinction can also be supported on a small scale in your own garden.

Contribution of the allotment gardeners

Some wild animals seek refuge in allotment gardens because they are driven out of their traditional habitats by agriculture and building activities.

By creating diverse habitats, we as allotment garden families can protect these displaced species and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity.



We leave leaves and brushwood piles for hedgehogs. Native shrubs and natural hedges are important retreats and food sources for birds and should be used instead of thujas and cherry laurel. Fortunately, these and other nature-orientated recommendations are already frequently implemented.

In this article, we want to focus on a small insect that is an endangered species. Allotment gardeners can contribute to its conservation by providing a variety of habitats and by gardening in a natural way.

Shining example

Exactly! Fireflies are a rare but all the more popular guest in your own garden. In the case of the "small fireflies" (*common firefly*), the flying male puts on a light show in summer. If, on the other hand, you discover a fixed light shining on the ground, this is the female of the "large firefly" trying to attract a mate.

Fireflies are not only beautiful to look at in the garden, they are also important beneficial insects. The larvae prefer to eat slugs and snails, which they kill with their venomous bites.



The example of the firefly shows how important the diversity of habitats in the garden is. Their original *habitat* is forest edges, bushes, damp meadows and gardens. In the course of its perennial development, the firefly needs different habitats. These include warm sunny and moist shady spots, shrubs for a better view when searching for a mate, as well as piles of branches and dry stone walls for shelter. A flower or herb meadow would be ideal for the fireflies. But at least in one part of the garden, you should provide a wild corner.

Females are particularly well attracted by the heat generated by piles of cuttings left lying around. However, you should never try to "relocate" fireflies from their home territory yourself.

The greatest danger to the firefly is the use of *slug pellets* and other synthetic pesticides. Mineral fertilisers should also be replaced with compost and organic fertilisers. *Light pollution* is also an ever-increasing danger for the luminous beneficial insects. The larvae become less active due to light and their successful search for mates is severely disrupted. Artificial lighting should therefore be minimised as far as possible. Necessary light sources should only shine directly onto the ground. Motion detectors can be used to reduce the duration of lighting.

Supporting natural species diversity

Even if we have limited ourselves to the firefly today, many endangered species naturally benefit from the diversity of habitats in your own garden. For example, herb snails with dry stone walls are an ideal retreat for lizard species and a sandarium is the ideal nesting place for endangered wild bees.



Not only animals but also plants are protected by the species protection agreement. In the interests of biodiversity, allotment gardeners can contribute to the continued existence of rare species through the diversity of varieties of herbs, fruit, vegetables and other plants. Swap your "treasures" with your neighbours or visit one of the rarities exchanges to achieve this diversity. In this way, species beyond the mass assortment from the DIY and garden centres are preserved and in turn provide animals with food and alternative habitats.

The *UN World Wildlife Day* is not just a declaration of intent by the United Nations. We allotment gardeners can support endangered wild species by gardening close to nature and providing a diverse range of habitats in our own "little green space".

We recommend the "[VERSATILE GREEN SPACES](#)" guidelines from the [SYM:BIO project](#) as support for implementation.

