



HORTI-HEROES

What we'd like you to do

- ✓ Take steps to reduce the environmental impact of the way you manage the greenspace on your park, and so reduce the environmental footprint of your business.
- ✓ Put in place a plan to address one or more aspects of your park's horticultural management.
- ✓ Do something **NEW** that will make a significant positive impact for the environment.
- ✓ The scope of the work should reflect the resources you have and the location and size of your park. For example, a large park might develop a plan covering all aspects of its horticultural work; a small family park may only focus on setting up a new compost heap. A residential park might encourage its residents to green their gardens.

Why take the challenge?

If it is done in a non-sustainable way, managing the greenspace on a park can have a significant environmental impact and can actively harm wildlife. However, sustainable park horticultural management offers a wide range of opportunities to help wildlife and the wider environment, by saving energy, water and other resources, doing things in an organic and chemical-free manner, and using more environmentally friendly products. Overall, becoming a horticultural 'hero', will help you to take a big step forward to minimise the environmental footprint of your park.

Key steps

1 Decide what you're going to do ...

- ✓ Decide whether you are going to concentrate on a specific area of horticultural management e.g. energy or water use, or whether you are going to put in place a more general plan.
- ✓ Think about aspects such as energy and water conservation, where you source new plants, and the chemicals, machinery and other resources you use.
- ✓ If you can, do a baseline survey to see what energy, water and other resources you are using, this will help you see where you are having the biggest environmental impact and so help you focus your approach.
- ✓ Use the [good ideas](#) and [resources](#) below to inform your thinking and to help you develop your plan.
- ✓ Get help and advice from a local wildlife group.

2 Make a plan...

- ✓ Once you've decided what you're going to do, put together a simple plan with actions and goals - time-tabled if possible. You can use the wildlife plan template [here](#).
- ✓ Your aim should be to do something that makes a significant positive improvement to the environmental impact of your park. For example, making proven energy and water saving, going peat- or chemical-free, or setting up an on-site nursery to grow native species for planting,
- ✓ Be ambitious!

- ✓ We would be delighted to receive a **copy of your [plan](#)**, along with **some photos** so we know what you're working on. Upload your plan and photos [here](#).
- ✓ Putting a [plan](#) together will help us know whether the scope of what you've got in mind is 'enough' to win the challenge.

3 Put your plan into action ...

- ✓ Put someone with the necessary skills in charge of the job and give them the time and resources they need to get on with it.
- ✓ Let everyone know what you're doing and keep them updated on progress.
- ✓ Use your challenge to educate everyone. Make the challenge part of what your park is 'all about'.

4 Report on your success ...

- ✓ When you've reached your project goal or a first major milestone let us know – send us details of what you've achieved and upload your report and photos of the results [here](#).
- ✓ If you are due an advisory visit, show your advisor what you've achieved.

5 Winning the challenge ...

- ✓ Once we've received details of what you've done, we'll review the information.
- ✓ If you have done enough, you'll win the challenge and get a badge to prove it!
- ✓ If not, we'll let you know what you still need to do.

NB: There are no strict deadlines for completing the challenge. An ambitious plan might take more than one year to put in place.

[Good ideas for your plan](#)

Aim for an overall horticultural approach that is as low impact as possible:

Energy conservation

- ✓ Invest in new **high-efficiency/electric/LPG vehicles** and other horticultural machines.
- ✓ Run lighting and machines off renewable energy e.g. use path-level lighting with in-built solar cells; have a green energy tariff; **invest in renewable energy generation**.
- ✓ Keep all mechanical **equipment well maintained** and serviced.
- ✓ Keep fuel use to a minimum by **careful planning**.

Water conservation

- ✓ Practice spot watering, use soaker hoses or a drip irrigation system. **Use mulch to reduce moisture loss**. Don't water during mid-day heat.
- ✓ Choose and plant **drought-tolerant** species.
- ✓ Install a **rainwater collection system** e.g. water butts, or more complex collection system to supply water for horticultural use.
- ✓ Implement other water conservation measures e.g. vans washed with buckets of water not hoses. **Avoid the use of pressure washers**.
- ✓ Use roadside swales and other soft landscaping features to **channel rainwater** off roads and to capture it for future re-use.

Waste management

- ✓ Minimise the amount of **horticultural waste** you produce by reducing waste e.g. using waste wood to make bird houses and re-using items e.g. mending broken tools.
- ✓ **Recycle all horticultural waste** – if possible, compost it on site.
- ✓ Use **compost produced on-park**.

Resource use

- ✓ If using commercial compost, **use a peat-free alternative**.
- ✓ **Implement** an organic or no-chemical policy.
- ✓ When choosing products such as paints or stains, research and choose the most **environmentally sustainable options**.

Sourcing plants

- ✓ Wherever possible use locally-appropriate **native species**.
- ✓ Have an on-park **nursery or greenhouse** where local plant species are propagated and grown for on-park use.
- ✓ Source native wildflowers, trees and other plants from a reputable supplier that guarantees **UK/regional provenance**.

General

- ✓ Ensure that your mowing, pruning, strimming and waste management regimes **do not disrupt** nesting birds, hibernating hedgehogs or other animals.
- ✓ Ensure that your mowing, pruning, strimming and waste management regimes do not remove valuable food and habitat that wildlife could otherwise enjoy e.g. **let birds feed on berries and seeds before pruning** shrubs and cutting back flowers.
- ✓ Think about taking part in Plantlife's '[No-Mow May](#)' initiative.
- ✓ Investigate **biological pest control** e.g. setting up a beetle bank where beneficial insects can live and reproduce.
- ✓ **Use traditional management methods** e.g. coppicing/hand-laying of hedges.
- ✓ Try and keep hard standing and tarmac to a minimum to **allow rainwater to drain away naturally**.
- ✓ Use **permeable hard standing** that allows grass to grow up through it.

[Online Resources](#)

The [Royal Horticultural Society](https://www.rhs.org.uk) ([rhs.org.uk](https://www.rhs.org.uk)) produces a range of downloadable lists of native plants that are good for pollinating insects. Look out for its *Plants for Pollinators* logo.

For some good ideas on sustainable horticulture, check out this RHS guide:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/gardening-for-the-environment/planet-friendly-gardening-tips>

For more information on drought-tolerant plants species, check out this guide from southern water:

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/waterwise-plant-guide>

There are 47 local [Wildlife Trusts](#) across the whole of the UK. They are a great source of information on ecological enhancement and management and should be able to help you conduct a wildlife survey on your park.

The [Conservation Volunteers group](#) is an excellent source of information on the more practical side of ecological management and a potential source of volunteer labour.

For advice on renewable energy generation and energy saving visit the [Energy Saving Trust](#).

For advice on renewable waste minimisation visit [WRAP](#).

For advice on water conservation visit [Waterwise](#).