

Badgers in gardens



Space for Badgers

Badger Trust always encourages creating more space for wildlife to maintain healthy, balanced, ecosystems. Badgers are a key part of maintaining this balance, so if you have a sett in your garden, the easiest thing to do is be patient and enjoy watching these key ecosystem engineers at work. Remember that badgers and their setts are protected, and disturbing them is illegal.

If you still need convincing, try putting up a wildlife camera so that you can watch badgers doing their natural behaviour, such as foraging for food and playing with one another – it can be fascinating! Their playful family dynamics and unassuming amble are sure to help endear you to badgers, and before long, badgers will hold a special place in your heart.

www.badgertrust.org.uk

Q&A on badgers in gardens

How do I know if a badger has visited my garden?

With their incredible sense of smell, badgers find food where they can. Often unseen and unheard, they wander quietly into gardens at night, feeding on the earthworms, grubs, snails and slugs they find in lawns and borders. They usually leave small visual signs – a snuffle hole or pieces of scratched turf – as visible evidence of their nighttime visit. They may even decide to include your garden in their territory by leaving a dung pile called a latrine to show other animals that they live there.

What are the benefits of having badger visitors?

Badger activity in your garden may have added benefits. Badgers are a central part of the ecosystem and have a key role in dispersing seeds through their dung. Like many animals that eat fruit, their faeces help plant the seeds further from the host plant and provide nutrients for the seeds to grow. The digging behaviours of badgers also help to create micro-habitats for pollinating insects, including bumble bees.



What do I do if badgers dig up my lawn?

As a protected and wild animal, you are limited in what you can do, but usually, it is possible to reduce garden damage without harming badgers.

- Often damage is seasonal, and you may see periods of greater activity in the late autumn (as badgers prepare for the winter) and spring (when badgers have cubs). If you can be patient, the badgers will often become less active at different times of the year.
- If you are having issues with badgers digging up your lawn, controlling the food source can be the first deterrent if you are unhappy about your nighttime visitors. A badger's primary food is earthworms, which they will suck from the surface like spaghetti, so they are unlikely to cause any damage. However, if they are digging into the lawn, they are probably looking for insect larvae beneath the roots of the grass, especially from Cockchafer beetle (May bug) and Leather Jacket (Crane fly).
- The season for grubs is relatively short-lived, and raked and well-drained lawns will help reduce the burden. You can also try removing weeds, scarifying dead moss, improving drainage or applying nematodes to help stop larvae from taking up residence in your lawn, where they will damage the grass root structure before the badgers ever snuffle them out.

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How to co-exist with badger visitors to my garden

Badgers are strong, determined animals and excellent diggers. Badgers will always use the same tracks for generations. When areas are constantly fragmented by new development, foraging ranges become restricted, causing them to find alternate routes to access their familiar territory.

If a badger is breaking fencing, consider installing a badger gate or leaving a gap, so they can pass through your garden without damaging the fence. For these to be effective, you should position it on a badger trail, i.e. the route the badger uses. This is the most effective way to co-exist with badgers.

Deterring badgers from gardens

When considering deterring badgers (and perhaps any wild animal) from a garden, remember that wild animals are just that – wild. They have no conception of gardens, fences, or where humans would rather they did or didn't go. The badger is simply exploring the area that may have been their home long before the person arrived to share it with them.

Many people are not lucky enough to see a live badger, so having a badger visit a property or garden could be considered quite a special thing. Considering the matter from this perspective can be useful when dealing with any inconvenience or damage they may cause.

Badgers can be discouraged or prevented from entering gardens by solid, effective fencing and locked gates. Where practical, electric fences are the most effective humane deterrents. There are no legally proven chemical deterrents for badgers. Recurring attempts by badgers to enter gardens are sometimes only resolved when a badger-proof mesh is trenched to a depth of around one metre to prevent them from digging under fences.

Deploying any badger deterrent means that badgers start to lose out on known territory to the point where human activity could threaten their wider existence in the area.

Badgers are determined and strong animals and will try to use long-established badger paths and access existing areas as part of their nightly activities.

The ideal solution is that the person in the equation looks at altering their behaviour or approach to the situation to learn to co-exist with the animal.

Important facts to remember

- Badgers and their setts are protected by law, and any interference could be a criminal offence.
- If you have a persistent issue with badgers that you need advice about, please contact your local badger group in the first instance.
- You can also contact us here at Badger Trust and seek advice from Natural England, which is responsible for licensing any activities relating to badger interventions.

For more information VISIT www.BadgerTrust.org.uk or **CLICK** the links below:



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