

This article is written by Holly Bassett who chose the B2Z project “Bring back the hedgehogs” for her Masters Dissertation. Nov 2023

Biodiversity Benefits in Brampton Gardens.

INTRODUCTION:

For my masters research project, I visited Brampton multiple times during 2023 to explore garden biodiversity as part of the ‘Bring Back the Hedgehog’ project with Brampton2Zero. And here’s a few

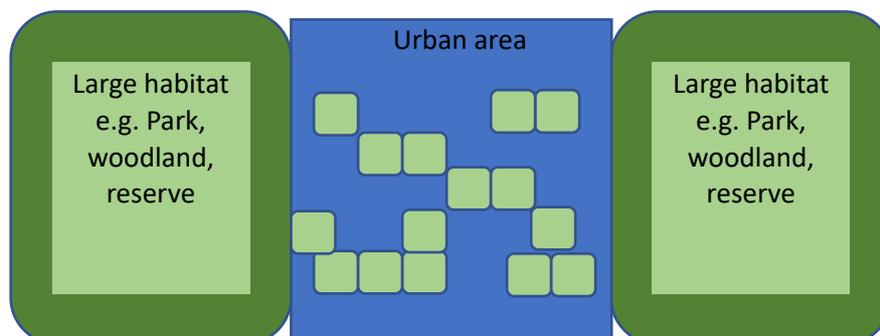
reasons why: England boasts a rich tapestry of land use, with residential gardens claiming almost 5% of the total land, marking it as the third-largest category (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2022); a staggering 7 out of 8 British households are fortunate to have a garden or green space, showcasing the widespread appreciation for these outdoor havens (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Interestingly, a significant 82% of the British public expresses a desire to witness more wildlife flourishing in their gardens (Wyevale Garden



Centres, 2018). The question arises: can these domestic spaces truly contribute to biodiversity? Let's delve into the world of residential gardens, unveil their potential as 'miniature nature reserves' and discover what this means for Brampton.

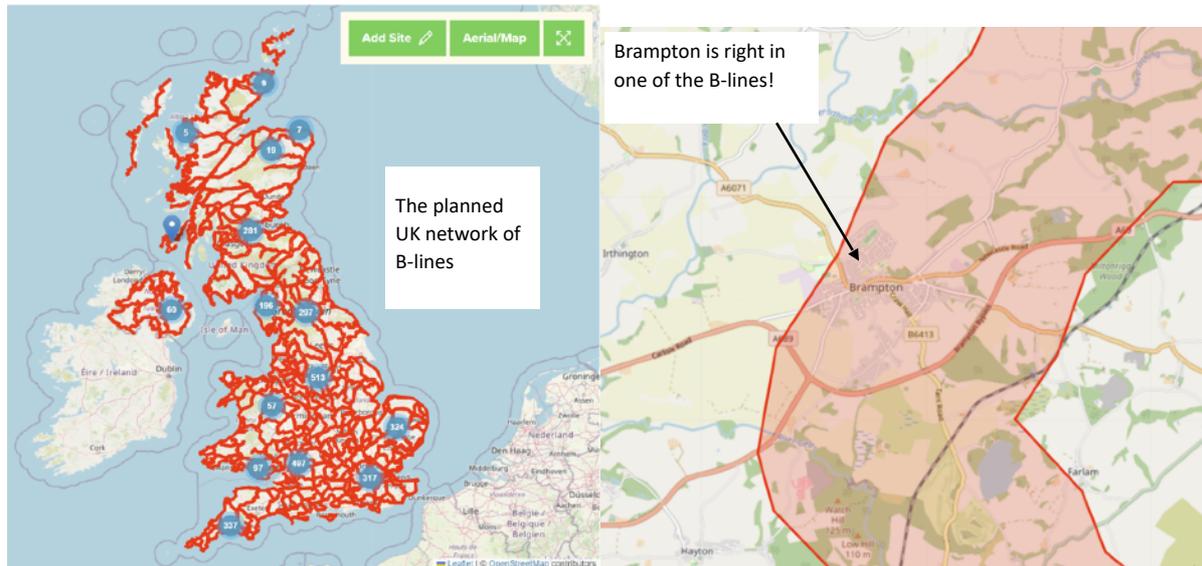
MINI NATURE RESERVES AND CONNECTIVITY:

The diagram below shows how gardens (the small green squares) can connect to each other and larger habitats, allowing wildlife to travel (red lines) between the habitats. Connecting the different habitats reduces the sensitivity of the wildlife to change, as they are not isolated and can seek out resources elsewhere. For more information on connectivity visit <https://giveitagrowwigan.co.uk/blog-gardens-as-wildlife-corridors/>.



Brampton is surrounded by wonderful patches of nature, with Talkin Tarn just to the south, and beyond that the North Pennines AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)(Visit Lake District n.d.) Nearby is also Milton Rigg Wood nature reserve, managed by the Woodland Trust (Visit Cumbria

2023b). Gardens and green spaces in Brampton could form a network, helping the wildlife in the area thrive by connecting these wild spaces across the wider landscape. Brampton actually sits in a key location for the Buglife B-lines project which aims to set up nation-wide corridors for our pollinators and insects (see maps below), for more on B-lines visit <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>.



GARDENS AND WILDLIFE:

Let's talk about residential gardens and their role in supporting biodiversity. When managed with wildlife in mind, these gardens become crucial habitats for various species (Owen, 2010). A study in Sheffield by Gaston et al. (2004) highlighted the substantial contribution of gardens to biodiversity, emphasizing their importance in urban landscapes.

In my research with Brampton residents, I found that wildlife-friendly gardens, characterized by the absence of pesticides, diverse vegetation, and various habitats, play a vital role in supporting wildlife. As part of the Brampton2Zero project focusing on 'Bringing Back the Hedgehog,' understanding hedgehog needs is essential. Embracing biodiversity in gardens is crucial as it provides the necessary habitats and food sources for these spiky visitors.

My project focused on invertebrates, the bugs and insects in our gardens, as they are a significant part of the hedgehog diet. Creating shelter and food sources for invertebrates directly contributes to feeding our hedgehogs. Connectivity is crucial for hedgehogs to move between habitats and find their preferred food. A single garden is insufficient; they need a connected network of gardens to form a habitat patch capable of supporting wildlife like hedgehogs.

The engagement I carried out during my project, and what I'm hoping to accomplish again here in this quick summary is to encourage an appreciation for all our wildlife and to help empower you to create your own havens for hedgehogs, worms, beetles, birds and all nature!

To find out more about the importance of gardens for nature, and some helpful tips on increasing biodiversity, visit <https://www.lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening>, and check out the article on FIVE WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR GARDEN FOR WINTER WILDLIFE article.