



Badgers in your garden...



Badgers are wonderful creatures and have been voted the best liked British mammal. Watching them in your garden foraging for food can give great pleasure and be educational for younger members of the family. The badgers will also remove some harmful creatures which may damage your crops, fruits or flowers, such as slugs or snails.

The badger has endured many threats over hundreds of years, but as our largest carnivorous mammal here in the UK has survived largely because it is so elusive! If you have badgers visiting your garden and want to encourage them, below are some tips on how you can do so safely, however please be mindful of your actions as this could be problematic for others in your neighbourhood and may make them reliant on you for a long term food source, so make your decision carefully. In severe weather though, when natural resources are in question, or in times of drought, it is certainly wise to consider a supplementary food or water resource.

If you perhaps would rather not have them frequenting your home, then this guide also contains some useful information on how to legally and gently dissuade them from paying you a visit.

What to feed badgers and when

Use wet pet food – but not fish flavour - or a specialist badger food which can be purchased from garden centres or pet food stores. Provide some fruits, such as apples, plums or pears, and nuts, such as unsalted peanuts or brazils. You can also leave out root vegetables like carrots, along with some cooked potato. If food isn't eaten overnight, remove anything that will go off and replace it with fresh offerings in the evening.

Badgers are nocturnal beings so they can prove tricky to catch sight of. These beloved woodland mammals do however visit rural and urban gardens alike and will normally arrive anytime after dusk – if you see a badger out in the daytime it could be that it is in trouble, so monitor the situation and

if you are concerned please contact us on the number shown on our website, or post a message - <https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/contact-us>

Gathering Evidence!

If you're finding the morsels you leave have been gratefully snuffled by morning, but can't be sure who by, you may want to invest in a trail camera. These brilliant devices include Infra Red LEDs, motion sensors and timer recordings to help you monitor which small nocturnal friends are visiting your garden. The cameras are waterproof and designed for camouflage.

Badger Deterrent advice

Lawn damage

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, pieces of scratched turf, as visual evidence of their night-time visit. In dry or frosty conditions when natural food is hard to come by, they may munch on flower beds and lawns in their search of food.

If you are having issues with badgers digging up your lawns, controlling the food source can be the first deterrent if you are unhappy about your night-time visitors, but there are other things you can try if you want to persuade badgers from entering your garden.

Please note – badgers are a protected species under law and it is an offence to harm them or interfere with their setts, so be very careful about what deterrent method you use!

Deterrents

You may end up having to rotate a selection of the countermeasures to stay one step ahead or change things up occasionally, so they do not become accustomed.

1. Remove the food source

Removing potential food sources is the easiest course of action. This means not allowing spilled bird seed to accumulate on the floor or other places that a badger could reach. Nuisance badgers that invade your kitchen compost bin or garbage can are easily controlled by securing lids with bungee cords. If you feed birds or other animals, especially with nuts or fruit, suspend this activity to reduce attracting badgers.

2. Fencing and electronic devices

Badgers can be discouraged or prevented from entering gardens by solid, effective fencing, ground level locked gates and the use of ultrasonic deterrent devices, such as Animal-Away Plus. There are also ultrasonic repellents available which work using motion sensors and emit ultrasonic sounds when they sense a badger is in range. Recurring attempts by badgers to enter gardens are sometimes resolved only when badger-proof mesh is trenched in to a depth of around one metre to prevent them from digging under fences. For further advice on the type of fencing that may be appropriate – please reach out to a specialist fencing contractor.

3. Noise

A radio left on all night in a garden-at levels which don't offend neighbours can successfully discouraged badgers from entering. The sight of an obvious human or dog-like shape may help - so a scarecrow with a noisy flapping nylon cape may help deter badgers - especially if you can move it around or swap it with other scarecrows on nearby allotments.

Other unusual sounds (like wind-charms or noisy-plastic toy windmills or a bunch of old shiny CDs hung up to make a clattering noise) can help for a while too. Other people have tried using highly reflective aluminized plastic strips on posts; as they flap about in the breeze, can create strange reflection patterns from security lights and they also will make a noise which may spook badgers.

4. Lion Dung

Like other territorial animals, the scent of a larger predator can be discouraging. Lion dung can now be purchased online, usually in pellet form, and sprinkling around the boundaries of lawns has shown effectiveness in deterring badgers.

5. Human Male Urine

Like the above method, this again involves using scent to establish marking of territory. The theory is that as territorial animals themselves, badgers will be put off by the scent of another male's domain. Dilute the urine in a 1:4 ratio and use either a watering can or spray gun to maintain discretion and not disgust your neighbours! Application will need repeating every few weeks so make sure your 'donor' is happy to keep you supplied!

6. Motion Lights

Like most nocturnal visitors to your garden, badgers can be easily startled into leaving in a hurry. Motion-sensitive security lights can be a successful deterrent but do make sure the beams are pointed in directions which will not upset your neighbours. If you have a recurring badger visitor, they may also become accustomed to the lights after a while, so if you have moveable ones that can be put into different positions, it can help you stay one step ahead.

7. Chilli peppers

Given their poor eyesight, badgers rely on sense of smell. By chopping scotch bonnet chillies finely and scattering over entry points to the lawn, this can discourage them from venturing much farther into your garden.

8. Tackle any pest issues

Consider the application of nematodes to reduce risks of grubs in the lawn. The grubs themselves cause more havoc than a few badger holes, so applying as a preventative measure around April/May or September/October can reduce your risks of an infestation. Try not feeding chemical fast food which only encourages shallow rooting and using Eco-friendly non-poisonous ways to reduce insect

damage to the lawn has a twofold effect, fewer insects like leather jackets and the crane-fly larvae for the badgers to sniff out and dig up and a stronger lawn turf structure making it harder for garden pests to survive and for the badgers to get to.

9. Manage your lawn

A well-aerated and drained lawn that is free of moss helps too, providing less than ideal conditions for insect larvae to live. If the badgers are digging in one spot in your lawn you can try firmly pegging some chicken wire over the affected area. The grass will grow through it, enabling you to mow over the area but the badgers will be put off as they hate the feel of wire getting tangled in their claws. Less frequent watering has a double benefit, too much watering encourages the grass roots to stay shallow instead of growing deeper to seek out moisture and in hot weather Badgers are attracted to wet lawns because the worms are easier to get to. For larger areas, you can prevent badgers digging deep holes by covering the area with tennis-court-type wire netting which is fixed a couple of inches below the lawn surface. Again the lawn grows through the mesh very well and this is very useful to stop badgers digging under sheds, foundations and buildings - not cheap, but it is a highly effective method to protect areas of vital importance.

10. Natural Oils

Olbas oil and citronella can deter badgers to some extent but need to be applied frequently, as scent diminishes over time and in rain.

11. Protecting the Raised Beds to your garden

If badgers are digging up bulbs or getting into raised beds a thick wire grid cut to size and fitted into the raised bed just beneath the soil surface will stop badgers digging. Plants will grow through the grid, but the badgers cannot dig through it and it can be removed for weeding and composting, etc.

12. Plugging existing entry holes

Plugging holes may help. If they are digging under fences, try setting a concrete paving slab in a trench under the fence to stop them digging under at that point. Otherwise, having established that it is safe to do so (i.e. no gas or water pipes, drains or cables), drive some long stout sticks vertically into the ground to block any tunnelling attempts at weak points along the boundary. Start with 3cm diameter wooden poles or 4mm diameter metal rods, set a few cm apart. If you can't dig into the ground, securing tennis-court-type wire netting on the ground (and to the fence) may be enough to prevent badgers getting through holes in fences.

Structural damage

Badgers are a protected species, and you can't do anything to cause them actual harm. If badgers are causing a serious problem like subsidence, structural damage or serious economic harm, it might be possible to get a licence from the authorities to move them to another area. However, wrecking your garden or digging a hole under your shed will probably not be counted as a serious problem. However here are some tips on what you could consider:-

You will need to ascertain that it is definitely a badger that is causing the damage – you can do this by putting out a trail cam – see the note on cameras earlier in this document. Monitoring their activity as to where they may be coming from and over what period, as the badger could just be passing through and will eventually move on.

The extent of the damage needs to be assessed – so what is the likely risk of the shed collapsing imminently? What remedial works are required to prevent the collapse? This is best assessed by using professional advice from a structural engineer (or similarly qualified individual) on the integrity of the shed and any required work to mitigate the damage. Dependant on this analysis it can then be decided whether the work would have a significant impact on the occupying badgers, or whether a short term seasonal exclusion needs to be put in place whilst the damage is fixed, or indeed if the remedial works do not pose a significant risk of major damage to the occupying badgers, then a licence may be granted for minimal interference. Any licences are granted by Natural England who will require sight of a method statement by the Engineer before any decision is made on licensing.

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We hope this guide has been useful – and you do indeed enjoy these wonderful creatures visiting your garden – safely and securely for them and yourselves!

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Binfield Badger Group is affiliated to the Badger Trust.

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Acknowledgments

This document was compiled from publically available information posted on the internet – including sources that include the Wildlife Trust, The Badger Trust, assorted Gardening publications and Natural England. August 2021.