

# Snakes in gardens

## Key facts

### Snakes are amazing but misunderstood - there's no need to panic

Snakes are a wonderful part of British wildlife. Many people are delighted to see snakes, yet for some it can be alarming. Please don't be worried. The vast majority of snakes that turn up in gardens are entirely harmless to people and pets. Snakes seldom spend much time in gardens, and are more likely to be passing through. Our leaflet [Snakes in gardens: frequently asked questions](#) has more advice.

### Your garden can help snakes

Sadly, habitat loss means that snakes are no longer as common in the countryside as they used to be. You can help by providing a pond or compost heap, or just leaving a patch of grass to grow long. Our leaflet [Dragons in your garden](#) is full of practical tips. Please avoid or be very cautious about plastic netting over your pond, vegetables and fruit, as snakes get tangled in it. See our leaflet [Snakes and garden netting](#) for lots more advice on this.

### It's most likely you've seen a grass snake or a slow-worm

Grass snakes and slow-worms (a legless lizard that looks very much like a snake) are by far the most commonly reported reptiles in gardens. You can check the identity of the snake using our poster [Identifying Britain's Snakes](#). Alternatively, [email us](#) a photo or description, or post it on our [Facebook page](#) or [Twitter account](#), and we'll try to identify it.

### Adders are rarely found in gardens

Most reports of adders in gardens turn out to be grass snakes, slow-worms or escaped pet snakes. Adders tend not to be found in gardens across much of Britain, unless your garden backs on to particular nature reserves or large areas of excellent adder habitat. [Our leaflet](#) has more information about adders in gardens.

### Removing snakes from gardens is often pointless

Some people contact us wanting a snake removed, yet as most snakes in gardens pose no threat, there's no need. They are timid, normally leaving of their own accord. In addition, it's likely that snakes live in your area and occasionally visit gardens, so there's little point in trying to remove one. There are very rare occasions when it may be sensible to remove a snake: if it's an adder and there is a genuine risk to small children or pets; if the snake is injured, or stranded in an unsuitable area; if it's an escaped pet. [Our leaflet](#) tells you more.



This grass snake is immediately recognisable from the yellow and black markings behind its head. Grass snakes spend most time in the countryside, but occasionally visit gardens, especially in southern England. Photo: Jim Foster.

## Grass snakes may feed on frogs or lay eggs in your compost

Grass snakes will occasionally eat frogs, toads or newts in garden ponds, but this is natural and nothing to be worried about. If you have valuable fish you may wish to deter snakes from visiting your garden to reduce the chance of them being taken. Grass snakes may lay eggs in compost heaps, which can really help the local snake population. We offer [more advice](#) on these issues.

## If you're terrified of snakes, garden maintenance can help

We encourage people to welcome—or at least tolerate—snakes in their gardens, but we recognise that some find this difficult. We don't recommend removing snakes except in exceptional cases. Yet you can make further snake visits much less likely by making your garden unattractive to snakes: for instance, keeping the grass cut short, and removing objects they may hide under. Bear in mind this will also deter other wildlife, though, so it's a last resort. See [our leaflet](#) for more advice.

## Snakes are protected by law, and a growing number of people campaign to help them

It's illegal to kill or harm any British snake or lizard, including any found in gardens. At ARC, we produce information like this note to help people understand snakes. Many myths hinder public appreciation of snakes. If you'd like to know more about our work, please [get in touch](#) and consider [supporting us](#).

Leaflet compiled by Jim Foster. Thanks to Kim Boughey, Angela Reynolds and Helen Wraight for comments.

If you have any suggestions for improving this leaflet, please let us know by email at:

[enquiries@arc-trust.org](mailto:enquiries@arc-trust.org)

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## amphibian and reptile conservation



Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) is a national wildlife charity committed to the conservation of reptiles and amphibians and the disappearing habitats on which they depend. Our vision sees amphibians and reptiles thriving in their natural habitats, and a society inspired and committed to their conservation.

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