Hilldrop

We were lucky enough to buy this place in 1990.
On a warm south facing slope it was the perfect place for us to mess about with wild plants, waste materials and habitats.

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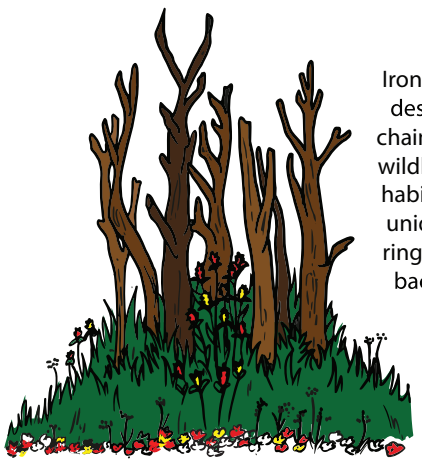


Standing Dead

Ironic that a lot of our important habitats can be described as dead; dead stuff kick starts a food chain that supports much of the more glamorous wildlife we love. Standing dead wood is one such habitat. Now increasingly rare in the wild it has a unique set of invertebrates. This 'standing dead' ring is made from the large trees we couldn't lay back into the hedges on each side of the field.

Shipping Container Garden Room

We built this garden room by using 2 used 20ft containers. For us their inherent strength to take green roofs and also remain portable really appeals. A 20ft container gives us a box in which we can fit a deep heavy green roof, fix habitat panels and most importantly can be moved in the future; a truly sustainable building. These buildings can morph and move but never be demolished.
This version is clad in UK Larch and insulated on the outside of the steel mitigating any issues with condensation.

Brownfield Garden

Our brownfield sites were recently described by Natural England as the 'rainforests of Britain' for the diversity of species on and in them. Unfortunately they look 'messy' and rarely elicit much public opposition to their destruction for development. Wildlife loves our mess, we just need to design the mess in a way that people can accept - that way we reuse our waste, create cool looking spaces and provide the best sites for much of our wildlife.
This is our attempt at starting that debate.

Trial Green Roofs

These are a copy of the roofs we put above our cycle shelters. We built them to trial different oils/drainage techniques and plant choice.
Great height to see the plants up close.

Sound Studio and Acoustic Sand Wall

We are using 10 and 20ft shipping containers to create a control room and live room for my son Sam to record in. The 20ft will be Larch clad and have a green roof. We have also built a 'sand' wall to act as an acoustic barrier and make space for bees to nest. We hope to add the studio into our range of green roof container we sell through http://greenroofshelters.co.uk

Badly Pruned Weeping Willow

I gave an excited tree surgeon friend a great day abusing this willow. Bad pruning means good bug habitat; extra drilled holes and bark damage, even better bug habitat. Surely the best use of a weeping willow?

Green Roof Bin Shelter

We design and make these shelters as part of our work to get wildlife back into towns and cities. This one happens to hold 6 wheelie bins but we also use a similar design to store bikes. We often trial ideas here in the garden before offering them for sale.

Sequoia

My good friend Andy grew this tree from seed and gave it to us as 3ft high tree in 2000

Rubble Planters

Planters - often pretty dull, often made from timber that rots quickly and rarely incorporating waste materials. These are made from a central core of drainage pipe filled with soil and an outer skin of crushed rubble; they will last for 50 years plus, use our waste and provide a niche for bugs; I like these.

Ponds

We have 3 ponds and a scrape (ephemeral wetland) in the garden. Ponds are the best thing - tiny ponds, ponds that dry out in summer – all are good!
The most important thing to get a great wildlife pond is not to introduce nutrients or fish. If you do that you're virtually guaranteed to have a pond that is healthy and full of life. Our bottom pond is simply dug into the heavy clay, unfortunately being at the bottom of the hill its gets a lots of nutrient run off in winter which is not ideal, the brownfield pond on the other hand has a butyl liner and we were careful not to introduce nutrients and too much vegetation, the top pond is a mix of both.

Dead Hedges

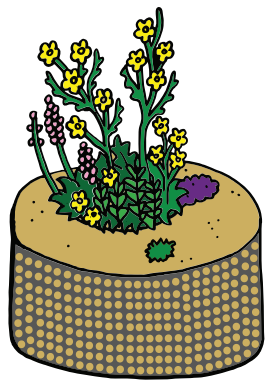
This technique of designing back in the waste from managing our greenspaces has been used by conservation groups for many years. It's a win/win - you get to dispose of the material onsite and wildlife gets a great habitat! We need to get this idea into our parks and gardens - it makes so much sense.

Bee Tower

Honey bees get all the press - they are social animals, you can't miss them if a swarm arrives and of course we get something from them; we steal their winter food store - honey. Solitary bees, of which we have over 250 species, are laid back creatures most of us hardly notice. They are messy and less efficient at packing pollen, preferring to get it all over them and scrape off the excess when they get back to their nest. This makes them 200x more effective at transporting pollen from flower to flower than honey bees, so be good to solitary bees, they are our most important ally. So please plant flowers high in nectar and pollen then drill some holes in untreated timber between 3-10mm, fix it in a warm sheltered place facing south and wait.

Sand Planter

We have been drilling holes in timber for many years to provide nesting space for our native solitary bees. That's all good but a majority of our native bees nest in the ground; last year we trialed what we are calling sand planters, a central pipe filled with soil surrounded by a perforated steel ring packed with sand.
The holes in the steel are 10mm diameter, big enough to let our native bees in but still contain the sand. Some bees like the vertical to nest and some prefer the horizontal. We really hope this will help to provide valuable nesting space into the heart of our cities.



Crushed Rubble Planting

We always knew that the best flower meadows occur on low nutrient soils. We also knew that brownfield sites were great for bugs, so 12 years ago we decided to scrape the top soil off a section of the most fertile part of the garden and replace it with crushed brick and rubble in an attempt to mimic the brownfield we loved. Recently we had our wonderful friend James survey our garden for bugs and as we had thought the most interesting part of our 4 acre garden turned out to be the rubble. Happy days.

Sand Trench and Reed Beds

We are always looking to add habitat into any piece of infrastructure. Here we had to lay a land drain so we back filled with Thanet sand hoping to give space for ground nesting bees.
The trench leads to 2 reed beds, one damp the other drier and 'stressed' 2 new habitats for bugs.

Designed by CariFrancisJones.com