

How to make a Hedgehog Box



The Hedgehog is one of our most easily recognisable British mammals which are found throughout the country and are well established in our towns, making good use of our gardens. They are the gardener's friend as it will eat slugs, beetles and other potential garden pests. To encourage Hedgehogs to stay in your garden you can provide a nest site in which they can spend the winter. This can either be a pile of wood or garden refuse or a purpose made box in which they can hibernate.

To make a box you will need the following:

4m (13ft) of 50mm x 25mm (2" x 1"), 8m (26ft) of 100mm x 18mm (4" x ¾"). Use untreated wood and don't be tempted to creosote the wood to protect it from the weather as the smell of either creosote or paint will deter Hedgehogs. You will also need a length of piping approximately 380mm (15") long, and about 12mm (½") diameter. A piece of 25mm (1") wire mesh netting. Two nuts to fit the diameter of the pipe.

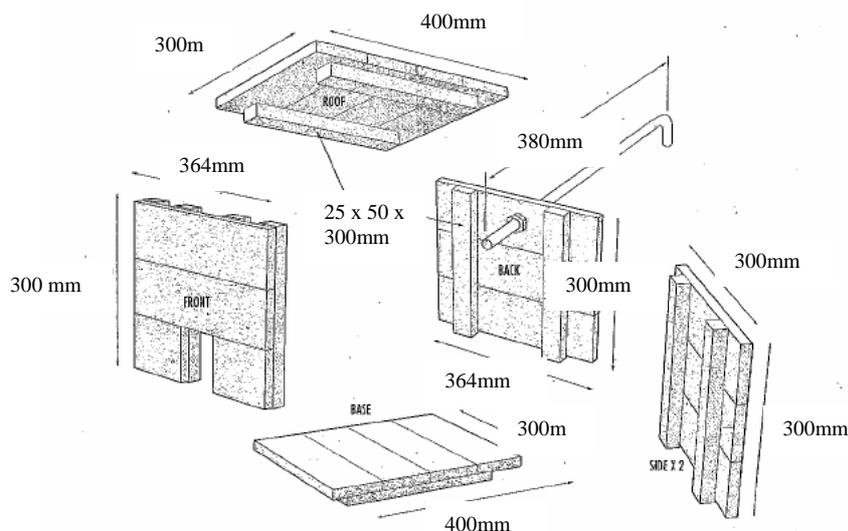


Diagram 1

To assemble the box

The entrance tunnel is the first to be made of four pieces of 100mm x 18mm (4" x ¾") fitted so that they make a run which is 100mm (4") high and 64 mm (2½") wide. This is large enough for a hedgehog to get through but small enough to prevent cats and dogs entering. Next, make up the top, bottom, back and front to the dimensions in *diagram 1*. Remember to leave a hole in the front panel to receive the tunnel. The front and back can then be nailed to the bottom and the sides but leave the top loose to allow for cleaning after use. Now drill a 25mm (1") hole with a brace and bit in the middle of the top board at the back. This hole is to take a ventilator pipe. Drill the hole in such a way that the pipe will slope downwards to drain any moisture away from the Hedgehog box. The end of the ventilator pipe should be covered with the wire mesh to prevent the pipe being blocked with leaf debris. Place nuts either side of the pipe to hold in place. See *diagram 2*

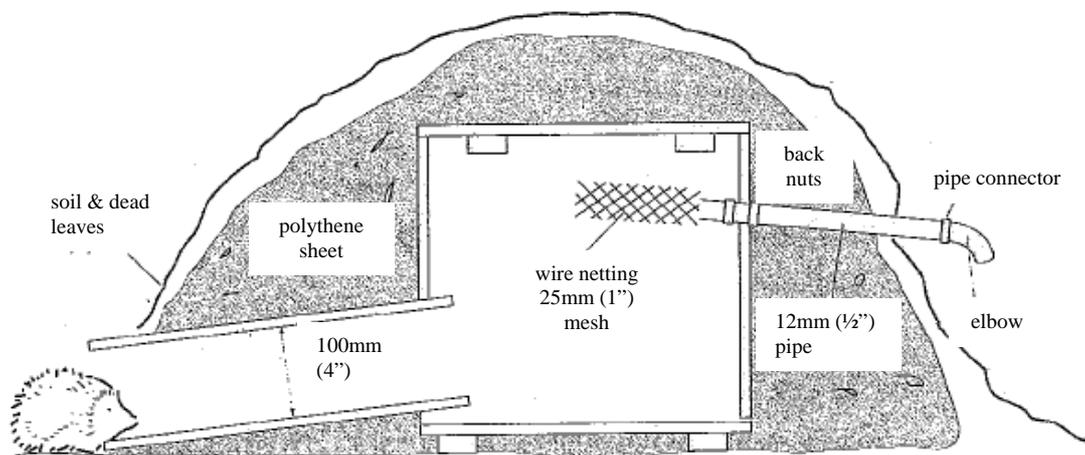


Diagram 2

Installing the box

Place some straw in the box to encourage the Hedgehogs to use it. Site the box in an undisturbed, 'wild' part of the garden, cover with either some polythene sheeting, old pond liner or roofing felt to keep out the worst of the weather and then cover the box (with the exception of the vent and tunnel entrance) with compost, leaves and twigs to create a more natural appearance and to provide extra insulation.

After care

The Hedgehog box will need a spring clean after it has been used as a hibernation area over the winter. To check if it is still being used put a piece of bacon rind into the entrance where birds can't get it, to see whether it disappears. If it doesn't this indicates that the Hedgehog is no longer using the box and you can clean out all the old bedding material. Use gloves to avoid being bitten by Hedgehog fleas.

Hedgehogs and Bonfires

Hedgehogs think that bonfires look like ideal nesting areas and many die as a result. It is essential to always check for the presence of hedgehogs, moving them safely away before lighting your bonfire.