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## PLANTING TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT BADGERS

- ❖ GRASS. If at all possible some areas should be mown regularly so that the grass is short enough for the badgers to find earthworms. Earthworms are their main food. The grass clippings should be kept on a nearby compost heap, to provide a useful supply of earthworms and invertebrates. In fact ideally there should be planned areas of grass to keep short created if necessary by planting meadow grasses and cutting them occasionally. There should also be areas of rank grass if possible to provide cover for possible prey such as short tailed field voles and wood mice.
- ❖ ELDER. Badgers are said to enjoy elderberries, but the local badger group in Leicestershire says that their badgers don't touch them!
- ❖ BRAMBLE. Areas of bramble should be retained since badgers are very fond of blackberries.
- ❖ TREES AND SHRUBS. Plantings around a badger sett could include any of the following trees, most of which produce fruit of some kind. Any new tree planting should be of British native fruit trees such as:
  1. Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)
  2. Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
  3. Apple (*Pyrus malus*)
  4. Pear (*Pyrus communis*)
  5. Oak (*Quercus robur*) could also be planted (though not in great quantity); in the longer term these would provide acorns which are said to provide a valuable source of autumn food for badgers in years when the acorn crop is good.
  6. Blackthorn - (sloe) - *Prunus spinosa*
  7. Bird Cheery - *Prunus padus*
  8. Wild Cherry - *Prunus avium*
  9. Crabapple (wild) - *Malus sylvestris*
  10. Guelder Rose - *Viburnum opulus*
  11. Hazel - *Corylus avellana*
  12. Holly, Green - *Ilex aquifolium*
  13. Mountain Ash - rowan - *Sorbus aucuparia*
  14. Plum, Myrobolan - *Prunus cerasifera*
  15. Hawthorn (Quickthorn) - *Crataegus monogyna*
  16. Rose (Dog Rose) - *Rosa canina*
  17. also Other Native Roses
  18. Wayfaring Tree - *Viburnum lantana*

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Winners of the inaugural *Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW)* "Partner of the Year" award 2005

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- ❖ A choice of trees should also be underplanted with a lower level of cover plants. Hawthorns and blackthorns can be planted around the sett to give the badgers cover and privacy.
- ❖ Planting bluebells (*hyacinthoides non scripta*) and pignut (*conopodium majus*) to provide edible bulbs and tubers, and in the case of bluebells fragrant bedding.
- ❖ Herbicides should not be used when planting new trees (this is because voles often attack the roots of new trees, badgers like voles and so the herbicide will go down the chain to the badger).
- ❖ If lack of water in the area then a water source would be a good idea too.
- ❖ If creating or thinking of creating a wildlife pond it is useful to know that badger claws can damage the "plastic or butyl liners". Flat stones or pebbles etc. can be used to protect the edges of the plastic and should extend under the shallow water.
- ❖ We can give contact details of badger group volunteers who are willing to help with ideas over the phone or when possible help with a visit. Please contact Susan Symes at the Badger Trust office on 020 7228 6444 or [susan.symes@badgertrust.org.uk](mailto:susan.symes@badgertrust.org.uk)

### **Suggestions from West Surrey Badger Group**

We have made plantings around artificial setts and have used indigenous fruiting trees like - hawthorn, crab apple, rowan, mountain ash, elder, etc. Nuts can be used especially hazel nut which will give mid-height cover and can be coppiced if desired. It is also a good idea to under plant with some low cover using low growing shrubs, and ferns, rather than bracken which may take over the area - etc. If the site is right, and if access to the sett is not expected on a regular basis then blackberry and holly can be used which will eventually afford some protection for the sett from uninvited guests. Both of these plants can be cut back to re-grow if desired. If the site is large enough a large tree such as an oak or chestnut (which can also be coppiced if desired) could be included in the vicinity of the sett.

We prefer to use indigenous and if possible wild varieties of these plants where the sett is in a "natural or wild" site. Nevertheless if there is not the desire or need to only use wild plants any fruit tree would be appreciated by badgers who love all orchard fruits and of course any raspberry canes or currant bushes! The aim is to build up multi-level cover and at the same time provide the badgers with something to eat into the bargain.

If you look at badger dung in the summer or autumn you will find the seeds of all the above fruit so we can vouch for the suitability for badger foraging.

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