**What are the rules for having a bonfire in your garden?**

Remember **it is not illegal to have a bonfire and there are no local bye-laws preventing you having one**, however you must not cause a nuisance to your neighbours. A smoky bonfire or having garden bonfires on a frequent basis may well cause a nuisance and that can be an offence.

**What is the legal time to light a bonfire?**

Do time your bonfire correctly: while legally you can do this **any time of day or night**, it is common courtesy to plan your bonfire in a way that it finishes burning at dusk. Early morning and early evening are the best times for bonfires.

**What are the Best Practices and Rules to Make a Safe Bonfire?**

Fires are quick to spread, and a tiny spark can cause a massive fire if you do not handle a bonfire cautiously. A bonfire may be a great way to dispose of garden waste, but it is essential to be mindful of its effect on your neighbours and the community. To stop your bonfire from being harmful, follow the tips given below:

* Build your bonfire well clear of buildings, garden sheds, cables, fences, trees and hedges.
* Never use flammable liquids to start a bonfire
* Altogether avoid burning plastics, polythene, paints, rubber, petrol or oil, aerosols etc. These materials may cause severe consequences as they may release poisonous gases and also cause big explosions that may lead to injuries.
* Do not burn something wet or damp and also something that can be a commercial waste as doing so may increase the amount of smoke and fumes.
* Burn garden waste that is dry like bark, dead flowers, grass and hedge cuttings, leaves, plants, small branches, twigs and weeds. Avoid burning soil.
* Avoid burning domestic waste that should go into your general waste or recycling containers, such as food and plastic packaging.
* Leave notice for the neighbours so they are warned ahead of time about the bonfire. The neighbours are unlikely to complain if they know about any kind of smoke or flames that is pre-planned and harmless.
* Ensure the fire you build is away from any kind of trees, fences, hedges, overhead cables and buildings, or anything at risk of catching fire.
* Ensure that you have a water sprinkler or water pipe around, which will help you control the fire if things get serious. You can also keep a[fire extinguisher](https://www.oneeducation.org.uk/types-of-fire-extinguishers/) nearby in case of an emergency.
* Take any possible steps that may cause nuisance or disturbance to the neighbours. When building the fire, check on the direction of the winds and also the weather. Smoke stays for a long time in damp and still weather. Avoid lighting fire if the weather is windy as smokes drift off quickly to the neighbourhood and roads.
* Ensure that you are burning material quickly and in small amounts to reduce the amount of smoke produced.
* Do not use any kind of oil or spirits to create flames, and also, avoid dumping any type of explosive in the fire as it will cause harmful effects to everyone and the environment.
* Always keep your bonfire attended and in check. Do not leave it alone to burn out.
* Ensure that all the flames are burnt out and extinguished with water and the bonfire is cold before leaving the site.
* Ensure that children and domestic animals, and pets are away from the fire.

**How to have a wildlife-friendly bonfire this year.**

There are a few simple steps you can take to ensure your back garden bonfire is as safe as possible for hedgehogs and other creatures. Here are some top tips for having a wildlife friendly bonfire night.

* Don’t build it until the same say that you will light it. The longer it’s left the more likely that a hedgehog will find its way into your bonfire.
* If you need to build your bonfire in advance, make sure you place chicken wire one metre high all the way around the bottom. this should be placed at an outward angle to make it more difficult for hedgehogs to climb.
* If you have stored your bonfire materials outdoors before building it, move them to a different patch of ground before you start.
* Place your bonfire on open ground – never on a pile of leaves as a hedgehog may be hiding undermeath.
* Always check the entire bonfire for hedgehogs before lighting it. Remember that they tend to hide in the centre and bottom 2 feet in particular.
* When checking lift parts of the bonfire section be section using a pole or broom. Don’t use a fork, spade or rake as this may injure the hedgehog.
* Use a torch to look inside the bonfire and listen to a hissing sound (a distressed / disturbed hedgehog).
* Always light your bonfire from one corner rather than in the centre, in order to give hedgehogs a chance to escape.