

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to: Attract Beneficial Insects to the Garden

Although insects may cause annoyance during the summer months, certain insects are very beneficial to the garden and can pollinate the plants as well as eat other harmful insects. There are a variety of ways to attract the good insects to your garden.

What insects are beneficial and which are harmful?

Insects such as aphids and cutworms dine on vegetables, but there are other insects which feast on the harmful ones. The beneficial insects include green lacewings, lady beetles, assassin bugs, praying mantises, pirate bugs, ground beetles, syrphid flies and damsel bugs, all of which feast on harmful insects such as aphids, caterpillars, maggots, slugs, cutworms and others. Insects that serve as pollinators are beneficial, too, as plenty of garden vegetables require pollination to bloom, such as zucchini and squash.

Ways to attract them to the garden:

To encourage the beneficial insects to visit your garden and dine amongst the harmful insects as well as pollinate your plants, you must create an environment for them that includes food, water and shelter. Providing pollen and nectar can be done by planting certain flowers throughout the garden, primarily ones with shorter nectaries, such as plants in the carrot family. Flowers from the fennel plant, sweet alyssum and statice offer food for beneficial insects. For shelter, insects can hide in marigolds or under broad leaves or in shrubs and be sure to leave small puddles around after watering



[Seeds to attract bees and other beneficial insects available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

to provide water. When planning the garden for planting, try to intersperse the flowers benefiting the insects among the vegetables you grow.

Attracting pollinators:

Although insects that eat and eliminate the harmful ones in your garden are beneficial, pollinators such as bees and butterflies are important for a healthy garden as well. Bees, similar to other insects, are typically looking for an environment that offers food such as nectar and pollen. Pollinators are oftentimes attracted to native plants, so look up the best native plants in your area. For Indiana, this can include purple coneflower, foxglove, columbine, bergamot and more. Also, be sure to include multiple different colors when planting flowers, as bees are attracted to blue, purple, yellow, white and violet.

Can I use pesticides?

Using pesticides or insecticides risks eliminating the beneficial insects from the



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garden, and it is suggested to not use pesticides at all, not even those claiming to be more benign. Once you eliminate the use of pesticides, you may see an increase in the pests at first, but the insect allies will come and feast upon those that harm the garden.

What if the beneficial insects don't come?

Believe it or not, it is possible to order some types of beneficial insects through the mail to then be hand-released into your garden. If you're struggling with attracting the beneficial insects, some breeds available by mail are lacewings, lady beetles and Trichogramma wasps for relatively cheap prices. Pirate bugs and big-eyed bugs also can be mailed, but the prices for those are generally more expensive.

You can find seeds that attract bees and other beneficial insects on our website at ufseeds.com!



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