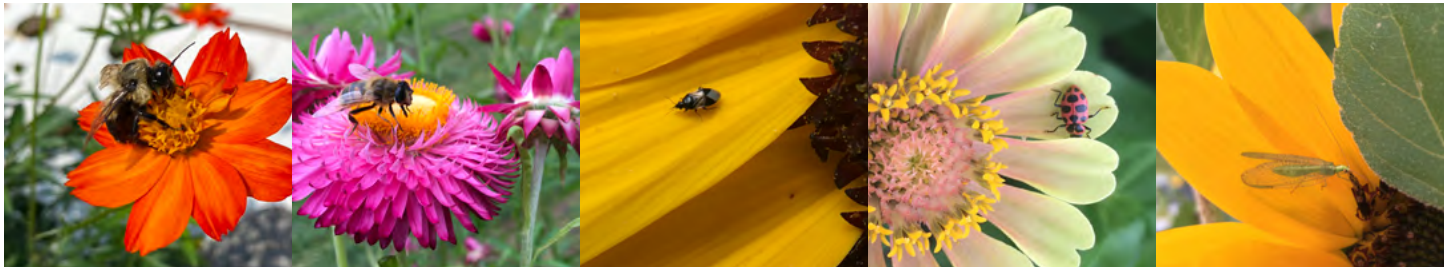


How to Create Habitat for Beneficial Insects

Urban Farms & Gardens



What is a beneficial insect?

Beneficial insects include a diverse collection of pollinators — not just honey bees — as well as flies, wasps, beetles, bugs and other insects that kill pests. While not technically insects, spiders and predatory mites also serve as natural enemies of pests.

What attracts and keeps beneficial insects?

- Food – diverse flowering plants with lots of pollen and nectar
- Shelter – a variety of plants and ground covers
- Protection from harm – especially exposure to pesticides

1. Choosing a spot

There are many “right” spots for beneficial insect habitats. Avoid creating habitat near spaces where pesticides are regularly used and take note of site characteristics, as they will influence the following choices:



2. Choosing plants

Try to keep something blooming from early spring through late fall to feed your insect friends. Learn which flower species produce more pollen and nectar and select plants with diverse flower shapes and growth habits to feed as many insect visitors as possible. These plants can be annuals or perennials, native or non-native (but not invasive). There are many lists of pollinator-friendly plants, and most will support other beneficial insects, too. Check out the QR code at the end for more information.

3. Managing weeds

Weeds will always be a challenge, but you have many options. Investing time managing weeds before planting insect-friendly plants will pay dividends. Use the QR code to learn more about the following techniques.

Before you plant you can:

- smother weeds (for example, with a tarp)
- repeatedly disturb the soil (cultivate)
- grow a cover crop
- solarize the soil

Once your desired plants are in the ground you can:

- mulch (using organic material like woodchips, straw, dead leaves, etc.)
- hand weed
- mow (if you're trying to grow perennials and have mostly annual weeds)
- carefully apply an herbicide only to the weeds (always read and follow label instructions)



4. Growing plants

Plants can be started in the spring or the fall from seed or by transplanting seedlings. Timing and growing selections will depend in part on your goals, available resources, and weed management strategy. If you are seeding perennials, do this in late fall. Perennials transplanted in the fall also fare better since increased soil moisture and cooler temperatures are less stressful to young plants. For annuals, follow the instructions that come with the seeds or seedlings.



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