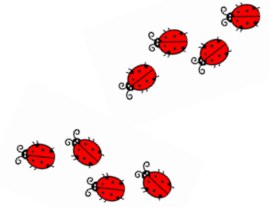




Insect Houses – A Place to Call “Home”

We put out bird feeders to help our feathered friends. Now, it's time to start creating homes for the many beneficial insects that inhabit our gardens.



What is an Insect House? An insect house is a shelter that is filled with bug friendly materials and provides a safe place for insects to hibernate over the winter.



How does an Insect House benefit my garden? Beneficial insects are natural predators that control harmful pests that damage the fruit, vegetables and flowers in our gardens. Giving these “good guys” a home improves the ecological balance in the garden and eliminates the need to use pesticides.

There are good bugs? Wasps, ground beetles, lacewings, ladybugs, centipedes, hoverflies, and spiders are all wonderful guests in a garden. They feed on a variety of pests such as aphids, mites, mealybugs, slugs, snails, cutworms and termites.

How do I build an Insect House? There are no real rules for building insect houses. They can be simple or they can be mansions.



The basic structure can be an open-faced box made of untreated wood or it can be recycled material such as an empty 2-litre plastic pop bottle with the ends trimmed off.

The most important thing is to protect the contents of the house by providing an overhead roof and by drilling drainage holes in the bottom.

What do I put into the Insect House? Insects love messy environments. Fill their new home with a variety of these materials:

- Dead wood is essential for the larvae of wood-boring beetles. Areas under the bark make good homes for centipedes, wood lice and spiders.
- Hollow stems, bamboo canes and holes drilled into blocks of wood attract wasps and solitary bees. If drilling into wood, vary the hole depths and widths and drill the holes at a slight downward angle for drainage.
- Straw, dried grass, shredded newspaper and mature seed heads from perennials make an ideal home for lacewings.
- Twigs, sticks, dry leaves, pine needles and pine cones mimic a forest floor. They make a cozy home for ground beetles, ladybugs and hoverflies.

Place the material loosely so that your guests have room to burrow in and get comfortable. As a final step, cover the open faces of the insect house with an open mesh like bird netting or with chicken wire to protect your guests from foraging birds.

Where should I put the Insect House? The insect house should be placed in a sheltered area, facing away from prevailing winds. Depending on the style of house, it can be placed on the ground or hung from a fence or tree branch.



Ideally, the house should be near nectar plants such as alyssum, cosmos, daisies or yarrow, to name a few, in order to attract the insects that will make the house their winter home.