



Create a deadwood pile for beetles

Beetles, spiders and other insects use piles of dead, damp and rotten wood as a place to shelter and feed. Dead wood is not a common sight in the countryside anymore, as it gets cleared away to make woodlands look tidier. This means that beetles and other insects lose this important habitat.

How to make it:

Pile up the deadwood and different sized logs in a cool, shady part of your garden.

Add bark and leaves to the pile of wood. These will also attract hibernating toads and hedgehogs to the pile.

Leave the pile to rot naturally, creating perfect conditions for many different insects.

Add a new log each year, as the old ones decay.



You will need:

- Sticks, twigs and logs
- Bark
- Dead leaves



© Richard Smith

Gardening for bugs

Have you ever stopped to look at the bugs in your garden? You might be amazed at how many different types live there!

Many insects are declining, such as bumblebees, butterflies and hoverflies, and gardens are important safe havens for them.

By gardening for bugs, we can make a great habitat for pollinating insects and create a colourful summer buzz in your garden at the same time!

Inside:

- Make a bug hotel
- Create a bug-friendly garden
- Build a deadwood pile
- And much, much more!





Create a bug hotel

Bugs love an untidy garden! Piles of leaves provide a food source for some bugs and shelter for others. For many bugs, a heap of autumn leaves is the ideal place to hibernate through the winter. If you have a garden with no room for a bug-friendly patch of untidiness, why not make a bug hotel out of a 'tidy' leaf pile?

How to make it:

Get a one metre length of chicken wire or plastic mesh from your local garden centre. Roll it into a tube and tie it in place using four twists of plastic covered garden wire.

Take some dead plant stems or twigs and poke them through the sides of the tube at the bottom. Overlap the twigs to form a natural mesh which will stop the leaves from falling out.

Gather plenty of dead leaves and use them to fill the tube.

Put a piece of wood on top of the tube to weigh it down and keep it from blowing over in windy weather.

Put your hotel in a quiet, shady corner of the garden for your bugs to enjoy.

You will need:

- 1 metre of chicken wire
- Twigs
- Leaves
- A block of wood



Create a ladybird and lacewing hotel

Provide your ladybirds and lacewings with a safe place to hibernate over the winter, by making your own hotel. Ladybirds and lacewings are a gardener's friend, as they feed on aphids which can damage plants. Encouraging natural predators is a great way to keep a healthy balance in your garden, without the need for pesticides or chemicals.

How to make it:

Wash out an old recycled bottle and dry it thoroughly.

Carefully cut the end off the bottle and smooth any rough edges.

Cut a large strip of cardboard, the same height as the bottle. Roll the cardboard up and squeeze it into the bottle, to create lots of bug-friendly crevices.

Tie string around the top of the bottle and hang it at shoulder height, in a sunny and sheltered location.

Wait until autumn and look out for ladybirds and lacewings as they begin to use your hotel!

You will need:

- A recycled plastic bottle
- String
- Cardboard





Create a worm wilderness

Why garden for earthworms?

Worms are hardworking recyclers. They work away under our feet everyday, ensuring that our gardens have rich, healthy soil to grow glorious flowers and large juicy vegetables. These small forgotten heroes need a bit of love and care to allow them to thrive, why not try to make your garden a worm-friendly zone?

Top tips for gardening for earthworms

Make a mess! Worms love a messy garden with lots of dead leaves and wood, so don't tidy it too much, let your worms recycle it instead. Dead plant material is an important food source for earthworms.

Having a diverse range of native plant species in your garden will encourage a range of different earthworms and nematodes, which will in turn create a healthier more diverse soil.

Avoid using pesticides. Earthworms are soft bodied animals and are vulnerable to toxic chemicals.

Have a compost heap and/or a wormery. These are efficient and environmentally friendly ways of disposing of kitchen and garden waste.

Have damp and marshy areas in your garden. These areas are favoured by earthworms and they help to maintain worm numbers, even in dry conditions.

Create a bee hotel

Hollow tubes are perfect for nesting solitary bees. Unlike honey bees and bumblebees, solitary bees live alone and use empty holes as a nest site for their young. They lay their eggs in the holes and then seal them up with a clump of chewed mud or a leaf. These beautiful bees are brilliant at pollinating flowers.

How to make it:

Ask an adult to help you cut the bamboo canes into 10-20cm long pieces.

Tie the canes together in a bundle with string, twine or wire to create your hotel.

Hang the hotel in a sunny but sheltered part of your garden, at around 5ft above the ground. On the side of a shed or on a wooden trellis is ideal.

Watch and enjoy your bee hotel. In spring, solitary bees may use the holes to nest, but it could take them a year to find it. In the meantime, spiders and other bugs will use the hotel too.

You will need:

- Bamboo canes
- A saw to cut the canes
- String, twine or wire





© Steven Falk

Create a bug friendly garden

A good way of helping bugs is to plant wildflowers in your garden. These will provide pollen and nectar for bees and butterflies, while larvae, such as caterpillars, will often feed on their leaves.

No flowerbeds? No problem!

The best place to plant wildflowers is in a sunny spot in the garden, but if you don't have much space, you can plant them in a container instead. Any container will do, as long as it has drainage holes in the bottom. Once you've found a suitable container, fill it 3/4 full with peat-free compost.

When to plant

Many wildflower seeds need to be chilled before they germinate, so a good time to plant them is in late autumn. Sprinkle the seeds on bare earth and then gently press them into the soil. Water them lightly and make sure the compost doesn't dry out.

Which flowers to choose

There are many wildflowers to choose from, some suitable seeds include: Knapweed, Lady's bedstraw, Meadow buttercup, Cowslip, Oxeye daisy, Black medic, Field scabious, Selfheal, wild parsnip, wild marjoram and Yarrow.

If you buy a packet of mixed wildflower seeds, make sure that they are all native to the UK.

In addition to wildflowers, many bugs will also feed on herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, sage, basil, sweet marjoram, chives, lovage, lemon balm, parsley, borage and mint. So why not plant a herb garden too?

Maintaining your wildflower garden

As your flowers start to grow, you may have to thin them out if they become too crowded. Wildflowers thrive on their own, so you can leave them alone apart from occasionally watering them if needed. Once they have finished flowering, do not cut them back or pull them up. Some wildflowers will flower again next year, while others grow one year and flower the next. Even dead flowers are beneficial to insects, as bugs will lay their eggs in the compost and hibernate amongst dead stems and leaves through winter.



© Scott Shan