



Ladybug larvae on Arrowleaf Buckwheat

## ATTRACTING BENEFICIAL BUGS

Insects play a critical role in fostering a healthy garden. **Predators** like beetles, spiders, praying mantis and lacewings eat pests; while **parasitoids** like wasps and flies destroy pests through larval hosting. **Pollinators** increase the genetic diversity of your garden, making plants more resilient; and in the soil, **decomposers** like worms, millipedes and pill bugs create pores that improve soil texture and turn organic matter into useable nutrients for your plants. You can order some of these insects from online pest control companies, but a better long-term solution is just to attract them from the landscape around you.

Heavy pest outbreaks usually signify an imbalance in the system - poor soil or plant health, improper plant siting, drought or even a previous pesticide treatment. So instead of automatically reaching for pesticides to treat the symptom, explore the underlying cause. Feed your soil, ditch the chemicals and incorporate beneficial-attracting plants into your landscape. Committing 5-10% of your garden to beneficial habitat helps reduce pest pressure, builds healthy soil and improves edible crop yields.

### HOW TO CREATE BENEFICIAL HABITAT

- Lean heavily on native plants, but don't be afraid to sprinkle in some choice annuals like sunflowers and sweet alyssum for extra foraging potential. Beneficial bugs often rely on nectar when pest populations run low, and the more food available in their immediate area, the longer they'll patrol your garden.
- Plant a diversity of trees, shrubs and perennials for year-round nesting sites and protection from severe weather.
- Plant in large swaths to increase foraging efficiency and aim to have multiple species blooming throughout the growing season. Make sure to include very early- and very late-blooming species.
- Provide a consistent, shallow and clean water source - shallow being the key word. Many beneficials are smaller than your fingernail, some nearly invisible to the naked eye, and they can easily drown in a few inches of water. Spread pea gravel along the bottom of a birdbath and place in a warm, sunny spot to make the perfect oasis for bees, butterflies and other tiny bugs.
- Leave dead snags, plant stems, leaf litter and open patches of dirt for nesting sites. If you can't resist the fall clean-up, pile unshredded plant material in an inconspicuous corner of your yard to allow insects to complete their life cycle.
- Don't use pesticides. Beneficial bugs are extremely sensitive to most chemicals even when labelled as "natural," and their slower reproduction rate actually gives pests the upper hand in the long run. Learn to tolerate minor pest infestations as that helps sustain your beneficial bug population.
- Let go of perfection! Feed your soil and give nature the space to run its course. Gardening is an exercise in patience and humility, and sometimes, the less we interfere, the more our gardens will benefit.



# PLANT THESE

	<b>Lady Beetles</b> <i>consume aphids, mites and other soft-bodied insects</i>	<b>Green Lacewing</b> <i>consume small insects, beetles and caterpillars</i>	<b>Syrphid Flies</b> <i>consume aphids and other small insects</i>	<b>Predatory Bugs</b> <i>consume many small insects</i>	<b>Tachinid Flies</b> <i>parasitize caterpillars, beetles and other insects</i>	<b>Parasitic Wasps</b> <i>parasitize caterpillars and small insects</i>	<b>Pollinators</b> <i>increase biodiversity and crop yields</i>
<b>Buckwheat*</b> <i>(Eriogonum)</i>	x		x		x		x
<b>Chamomile</b>	x	x	x		x	x	x
<b>Cilantro</b>	x	x	x			x	x
<b>Cosmos</b>		x	x	x		x	x
<b>Dandelion</b>	x	x					x
<b>Dara</b>				x	x		x
<b>Dill</b>	x	x	x		x	x	x
<b>Fennel</b>	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Goldenrod*</b>			x	x			x
<b>Lemon Balm</b>			x		x	x	x
<b>Mallow</b>		x	x			x	x
<b>Marigold</b>	x		x	x		x	x
<b>Milkweed*</b>	x			x			x
<b>Mint</b>			x	x	x	x	x
<b>Parsley</b>			x		x	x	x
<b>Queen Anne's Lace</b>	x	x	x			x	x
<b>Rudbeckia</b>			x			x	x
<b>Saltbush*</b> <i>(Atriplex)</i>	x	x	x				
<b>Sedum*</b>			x			x	x
<b>Sunflower</b>	x	x					x
<b>Sweet Alyssum</b>			x			x	x
<b>Tansy</b>	x	x		x	x	x	x
<b>Thyme</b>	x		x	x	x	x	x
<b>Yarrow*</b>	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Zinnia</b>			x			x	x

\* Native wildflowers: For a more extensive list of native pollinator plants, visit [worthygardenclub.org/resources](http://worthygardenclub.org/resources)