



Garden Notes

GN 129

ATTRACTING BENEFICIAL INSECTS TO YOUR GARDEN

The young (larval life stage) of many beneficial insect predators such as lady beetles, hover flies, lacewings, and parasitic wasps eat large numbers of insect pests. Adults of these good bugs feed on nectar and pollen. Provide adults with food and habitat in your garden with a variety of plants blooming from early spring through fall. This will encourage the production of all life stages of insect predators and will help reduce undesirable insect pests naturally.



Create plantings of varied heights in sun and shade to provide food and habitat for different insect species and life stages—eggs, pupae, larvae, and adults.



Plants with many small flowers are preferable to plants with large single flowers. Small insects may drown in the abundant nectar of large blooms. Small flowers include: asters, alyssum, small sunflowers, yarrow, cosmos, mints, stonecrops, lobelia, basil, thyme, lavender, parsley, dill, borage, and many other herbs.



Plant perennials that can remain undisturbed from year to year, as well as annuals that can be changed with the seasons.



Pests in your garden ecosystem provide food for the natural predators. Decide what level of plant damage is acceptable to you.



Pesticides will kill many beneficial insects even more effectively than the target pest species. Reduce or eliminate their use to encourage beneficial insects.

REFERENCES: Websites with plant lists and information about beneficial insects.

- UC IPM Pest Notes, Biological Control and Natural Enemies of Invertebrates #74140
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74140.html>
- UC IPM website: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu?MG/NE/index.html>
- UC Publication: How to Attract and Maintain Pollinators in Your Garden, #8498
<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=8498>
- UC ANR, Join the Pollen Nation:
[http://ucanr.edu/sites/Pollennation/How to Join/Make a Pollinator Garden/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/Pollennation/How%20to%20Join/Make%20a%20Pollinator%20Garden/)
- Farmer Fred: [http://www.farmerfred.com/plants that attract benefi.html](http://www.farmerfred.com/plants_that_attract_benefi.html)
- Ten Most Wanted Bugs in Your Garden:
<http://www.flowstobay.org/files/publications/10mostwanted.pdf>

PLANTS THAT ATTRACT BENEFICIAL INSECTS

EARLY BLOOMING PLANTS:

- *Aurinia saxatilis*, Basket of Gold alyssum (sun, medium height)
- *Penstemon* sp., penstemons (sun, medium height)
- *Potentilla verna*, or other cinquefoils (sun, low growing)
- *Thymus* sp., thyme (sun, low growing)
- *Aquilegia x hybrida*, columbine (shade, medium height)
- *Ajuga reptans*, carpet bugleweed (shade, low growing)

MID-SEASON BLOOMING PLANTS:

- *Achillea filipendulina*, common yarrow (sun, low to medium height)
- *Aster* sp., asters (sun, low growing)
- *Veronica spicata*, spike speedwell (sun, medium height)
- *Callirhoe involucrate*, poppy mallow (sun to light shade, low growing)
- *Coriandrum sativum*, coriander (sun, medium height)
- *Lavandula angustifolia*, English lavender (sun, medium height)
- *Potentilla recta*, sulfur cinquefoil (sun, medium height)
- *Lobelia erinus*, edging lobelia (part-shade to sun, low growing)
- *Mentha* sp., mints (sun, low to medium height)
- *Sedum* sp., stonecrops (part-shade to sun, low to medium height)

LATER BLOOMING PLANTS:

- *Achillea millefolium*, fern leaf yarrow and other yarrows (sun, low to medium height)
- *Allium tanguticum*, lavender globe lily (sun, medium height)
- *Anethum graveolens*, dill (sun, medium to tall)
- *Anthemis tinctoria*, chamomile (sun, low growing)
- *Feniculum vulgare*, fennel (sun, tall)
- *Limonium latifolium*, statice or sea lavender (sun, medium height)
- *Monarda fistulosa*, wild bergamot (sun, medium to tall)

ADDITIONAL HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE PLANTS:

- Annuals or perennials in the sunflower/aster family (many small flowers, petals around a central disk): cosmos, zinnia, small sun flowers, daisy, coneflower
- Cabbage, broccoli, mustard, bok choy, and radish allowed to flower
- Many herbs: borage, horehound, lavender, chamomile, rosemary, basil
- Mints: bergamot, pennyroyal, wood betony, thyme, (some invasive)
- Carrot family: angelica, coriander, parsley, dill, fennel, anise
- Sage family (*Salvia*): scarlet sage, Cleveland sage
- Pea family: vetch, clover
- Buckwheats (*Eriogonum*)