



Landscapes also serve as a luxury resort for insects

For many people, an inviting outdoor space is an essential part of the home. A few comfortable chairs, colorful plants in a garden bed or pots and possibly a firepit can provide a welcome respite. Did you know there are many insects that also enjoy your landscape? One way to make it even more inviting to insects is to provide them with an insect hotel.

There are a number of benefits to having an insect hotel in the yard, including increasing the natural balance of insects, providing more opportunities to teach children about insects, attracting insects that help control pest insects, attracting more pollinators, using up recycled materials and more. Big lawns and lack of dead wood in many landscapes leave these native pollinators without a place to live.

For several years, pollinating insect populations have been on the decline. Providing these pollinators with a home will have long-lasting benefits. Food crops rely on bees to pollinate them in order for flowers to set and grow fruit. The bees collect nectar from the flowers in the landscape, and in the process move pollen from flower to flower. Of the 100 most popular food crops, about 70 of them are pollinated by bees. And bees pollinate 80% of all flowering plants on earth.

Insect hotels are simple structures that provide shelter to a wide variety of beneficial arthropods, including bees, wasps and spiders. Ladybugs are also attracted to an insect hotel. Ladybugs are essential because they are a predator that will eat pesky aphids in the garden.

Insect hotels often are constructed from recycled scraps of wood, brick, bamboo, plant pots and other leftover landscaping and/or gardening materials. Gardeners can tap into their creative energy and design insect hotels to be aesthetically pleasing and tailored to their landscape. Beneficial arthropods are attracted to insect hotels because they require shelter for nesting or overwintering. Thus, the design of insect hotels should accommodate these requirements.

To attract these beneficial insects, the insect hotels should have lots of nooks and crannies with deep recesses. Drill holes of various diameters to create hiding places or spaces to overwinter. Tuck in some straw, leaves, pinecones or sticks to make the hotel more inviting.

Gardeners can get some fun design ideas at <https://instead.com/blog/insect-hotel/>.