



Building a ‘Good Bug Tub’ For Your Garden

Why would I want to attract insects to my garden?

Many people think of all insects as bad insects but that is definitely not true. In fact, less than 3% of all insect species are considered pests. Part of the reason many other insects do not become pests is because of good insects in the environment. These good insects keep other insect populations from becoming too large and bothersome to humans. Good insects are referred to as beneficial insects. You might want to attract beneficial insects to your garden in order to reduce the number of pest insects there.

A portable tub of plants that attract beneficial insects will control pests in your garden without you having to do anything other than move the tub. That means less money spent on pesticides and less time spent applying them. The ‘Good Bug Tub’ of plants will attract the good insects you would like to have in your garden.

How do I build a ‘Good Bug Tub’?

First, get a galvanized metal or plastic tub, the 18-gallon size are ideal for this project. Drill ten holes (1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter) in the bottom in order to provide water drainage. Fill the tub with a blend of potting soil, compost, or a commercial potting soil mix. If you don’t want to fertilize the tub weekly, add a time release fertilizer to the soil mixture. Set the tub on a stand with castors in order to make it easily movable. Keep in mind that larger wheels make the tub easier to move. Use plants from the list below inside the tub. Then place the tub in full sun, water it several times a week, and fertilize it weekly throughout the summer if you didn’t put time release fertilizer in the soil. Move the tub around as you need to. Remember that the tub will not only be a way to control pest insects, but it will also be a great decorative planter!

What bugs am I hoping to attract?

Ladybugs - more properly known as Ladybird beetles.

While adult ladybird beetles do eat aphids, the immature beetle is even more beneficial. The immature beetles look like tiny alligators and are often marked with orange or yellow spots. They don’t look anything like the adults that they will become! The immature beetles feed on aphids, scale insects, mites, mealy bugs, whiteflies, thrips, and the eggs of other insects.

Ground beetles

There are hundreds of kinds of ground beetles and most of them eat other insects. Both the adult and immature ground beetles are predators - they will feed on caterpillars, cutworms, root maggots, spiders, mites, and other beetles.

Hover flies - also known as syrphid or flower flies.

Hover flies are often mistaken for bees or wasps because they have yellow and black markings similar to those insects. Hover flies cannot sting you. Adult hover flies are not predators, but the immatures (maggots) are. They are pale, greenish brown and they eat aphids, leafhoppers, scale insects, mealybugs, thrips, corn borers, or corn earworms. One hover fly maggot will eat 400 aphids!

Parasitic wasps

Many wasps are predators of small insects and many other wasps are parasites of pest insects. Parasitic wasps live inside small insects or even inside insect eggs and eat their host as they are living inside them. When the adult emerges it kills its host. Some of these wasps are so small that you probably wouldn't recognize them as wasps.

Here is a **SMALL** list of plants you can use in your 'Good Bug Tub':

Name	Description	Growing Needs	Beneficial Insects
Basil - Golden Bouquet	12-24" tall	full sun, well-drained soil	repels aphids, mites, mosquitoes
Curry plant	12" tall	full sun - drought tolerant	parasitic wasps, parasitic flies
Dill	3-5' tall	full sun, rich soil	ladybugs, wasps, spiders, hover flies
Catmint - Dropmore	12" tall	average soil, needs at least partial shade	parasitic wasps
Roman Chamomile	8-10" tall	full sun, almost any soil type	parasitic wasps, hover flies
Gazania	6-15" tall	full sun, well-drained soil	ladybugs, spined soldier bugs
Monarda - Petite Delight	8-10" tall	full to partial sun, moist soil	parasitic wasps, hover flies
Nasturtium	6-12" tall	full to partial sun, poor to average soil	ground beetles, spiders
Scabiosa	24-36" tall	full sun, rich, well-drained soil	hover flies, tachinid flies
Sweet Alyssum	4-6" tall	full to partial sun, average soil	ground beetles, spiders
Yarrow	2-4' tall	full sun - tolerates heat and drought	hover flies, ladybugs, parasitic wasps

Compliments of:

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