

Plants That Attract Beneficial Insects

NON-NATIVE

Planting herbs and flowers and allowing them to bloom in the garden will attract many different kinds of beneficial insects. Aim for a variety of flower heights, sizes, and shapes.

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Cilantro/Coriander	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>
Sweet alyssum	<i>Lobularia maritima</i>
Marigolds	<i>Tagetes spp.</i>
Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
Lavender	<i>Lavendula spp.</i>
Zinnia	<i>Zinnia spp.</i>
Calendula	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>

NATIVE TO WESTERN WASHINGTON

While all native plants naturally attract beneficial insects, here are a few excellent options to add to your outdoor spaces:

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	CONDITIONS
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	☀️ 💧 🌿
Coast gumweed	<i>Grindelia integrifolia</i>	☀️ 🌿 🌱
Ocean spray	<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	☀️ 💧 🌿
Indian plum	<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	☀️ 💧 🌱
Red-flowering currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	☀️ 🌿 🌱
Henderson's checker mallow	<i>Sidalcea hendersonii</i>	☀️ 🌿 🌱
Western Canada goldenrod	<i>Solidago lepida</i>	☀️ 💧 🌿
Douglas' aster	<i>Symphyotrichum subspicatum</i>	☀️ 💧 🌿
Foamflower	<i>Tiarella trifoliata</i>	☁️ 💧 🌿
Stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	☀️ 🌿 🌱
Early blue violet	<i>Viola adunca</i>	☀️ 💧 🌱

CONDITIONS KEY

LIGHT	☀️ Full Sun	☀️ ☁️ Full/Partial Sun	☁️ Partial Sun	☁️ Shade
WATER	🚰 Dry	💧 Moist	💧 Wet	💧 Standing Water
FLOWERING TIME	🌱 Spring	🌿 Summer	🌿 Late Summer	



HOW TO Attract Beneficial Insects



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Gardens and landscapes thrive with diverse communities of insects, spiders, mites, centipedes, and harvestmen. While a few, like aphids and tent caterpillars, can damage plants, most play helpful ecosystem roles. Learn how to attract beneficial insects for natural pest control, pollination, and healthier outdoor spaces!

Easy Tips to Attract Beneficial Insects

MINIMIZE PESTICIDE USE

Even small amounts can harm beneficial insects. Consider using row covers to exclude pests from your garden, and opt for less toxic alternatives like insecticidal soap when necessary.

ACCEPT SOME PLANT PESTS

Eliminating all insect pests from your yard can discourage the establishment of beneficial insects.

ALLOW SOME VEGETABLE & HERBS TO FLOWER & SET SEED

Plants like cilantro, dill, fennel, basil, and kale are great for attracting pollinators and beneficial insects. Allowing these plants to bloom will provide floral resources such as nectar and pollen that will help feed beneficial insects when pests are scarce.

CHOOSE PLANTS WITH VARIOUS BLOOM TIMES

Growing a variety of plants with staggered bloom times ensures consistent floral resources insects need throughout the seasons.

ADD NATIVE PLANTS INTO YOUR LANDSCAPE

For millennia, native plants and pollinators have coevolved in response to environmental conditions and to each other's needs. Because of this enduring relationship, native plants' traits are beautifully matched to the preferences and behaviors of native insects and birds—providing ready sources of nectar, pollen, seeds, and habitat.

MOW HIGHER, LESS OFTEN, AND LET SOME WEEDS GROW IN YOUR LAWN

Allowing some broadleaf plants like clover, dandelions, or selfheal, to grow in your lawn provides an additional source of flowers for bees and other insects. Less frequent mowing at a higher height allows these plants to rebloom and attracts beneficial insects to your garden.

LEAVE SOME BARE SOIL IN YOUR GARDEN

Many insects, including many native bees, nest in the ground and require access to un-mulched soil.

CLEAN UP YOUR GARDEN IN THE SPRING RATHER THAN THE FALL

Leaving some plants to stand through the winter provides critical overwintering habitat for insects. Keeping a small pile of woody debris, if you have the space, is another great way to provide habitat for beneficial insects year round.



Helpful Resources

BOOKS

Cranshaw, Whitney and Shetlar, David. 2018. Garden Insects of North America. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Flint, Mary L., and Dreistadt, Steve H. 1998. Natural Enemies Handbook: The illustrated guide to biological pest control. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Haggard, Peter and Haggard, Judy. 2006. Insects of the Pacific Northwest. Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Walliser, Jessica. 2014. Attracting Beneficial Bugs to your Garden. Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Xerces Society. 2011. Attracting Native Pollinators. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing.

Xerces Society. 2016. 100 Plants to Feed the Bees. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing.

DIGITAL



Beneficial Insects, Spiders, and Other Mini-Creatures in Your Garden. WSU Extension.



A Pocket Guide to Common Natural Enemies of Crop and Garden Pests in the Pacific Northwest. OSU Extension.



Organic Pesticides: Minimizing Risks to Pollinators and Beneficial Insects. Xerces Society.



The Xerces Society



Native Plant Finder



Washington State University Extension



Oxbow Native Plant Resources