

# HOW TO BUILD AN INSECT HOTEL

If you make your own insect hotel out of junk you will give bugs somewhere to live and they'll repay you by helping you to control pests and even pollinate your plants.



## Before beginning

Insects are the ancient rulers of our planet from the time when man was not near. In several millions of years, millions of different species developed in each corner of the planet. Even when you just look closely at them, you will notice all the magic and unbelievable harmony of the colors and shapes of their wings. When you learn more about how they live, how they feed, reproduce, how they live in communities ... you will get a whole new look at these weird creatures and maybe learn from them. Numerous insects are not pests at all. They do, on the contrary, help to preserve the natural balance in gardens, meadows and orchards. They help plants to fecundate and produce richer fruits, some are just birds food while others live in the ground and make the soil softer with digging tunnels. When people treat

the fields with pesticides, they kill most of useful insects and they are not aware of the harm they do.

Winter is the time when insects run into hiding places where they are less cold. The hotel for insects can then provide them with excellent shelter. During the summer they can provide them a living environment and thus increase their number in the garden. The created habitat will help us to gather some of them in one place and look at it more easily.

The best time to make an insect home is early autumn, so that the bugs have somewhere to hibernate for the winter.

## **What you need**

You can get creative with these insect homes, as there are no rules. Here are a few things you might like to use:

### **Recycled stuff**

- Wooden pallets (These are essential – try asking at industrial sites and builders’ yards for free pallets.)
- Cardboard tubes
- Broken bricks and tiles
- Stone chippings
- Broken plant pots
- Corrugated cardboard
- Drainpipes

### **Natural materials**

- Logs and twigs
- Tiles for roofing
- Rotting wood
- Spare rolls of turf
- Dry leaves
- Bark
- Hollow plant stems
- Straw and hay
- Bamboo canes
- Soil

- Sand
- Whatever else you can find – preferably natural materials



## How to build your insect home

1. **Choose a good spot for your insect home.** Firstly, because most insects like cool, moist conditions, so a shady area next to a hedge or under the tree works well. Secondly, make sure the home has a firm base, because it will end up quite heavy. It will be good to find a place near some water (ex. Herb spiral pond). Thirdly, choose a spot where the insect home can remain for at least this winter.

You'll get different residents depending on where you place your hotel, sa some like cool, damp conditions and other (such as solitary bees) prefer the sun. If you have vegetable beds, keep it good distance away from them.

2. **Create a structure with.** You'll need a strong, stable framework. Try creating a home like frame with planks and shelves.



3. **Fill in the gaps with other materials.** The idea is to provide all sorts of different nooks and crannies, crevices, tunnels and cosy beds. There are no rules as to how you fill the empty shelves, but here are some ideas to attract different insects:

- **Dead wood** and loose bark makes a great home for wood-boring beetles, such as the majestic stag beetle, and their larvae. It also supports fungi, which can break down the natural material. Centipedes and woodlice can burrow under the bark.
- **Hollow stems, canes, and holes** drilled into blocks of wood are all ideal spots for solitary bees to lay their eggs. These bees help pollinate flowers (so helping your plants produce vegetables) in the garden. Because solitary bees like sunny spots, place these on the sunniest side of the insect home.
- **Stone and tiles** provide lovely cool, moist conditions for frogs and newts. They might be best lower down, on the shadiest side of the insect home.
- **Hay and straw, sheep wool** give insects a good place to burrow and hibernate.
- **Dry leaves** provide homes for insects, just like leaf litter on the forest floor. Ladybirds hibernate here over winter – and they're great for eating aphids in the garden.
- **Rotting wood and bark** is where beetles, centipedes, spiders and woodlice love to be. Because woodlice and millipedes break down woody plant material, they're an important part of your garden recycling system.
- **Corrugated cardboard rolled up inside a lemonade bottle** will attract lacewings, which are really good at eating pests.

Surround your hotel with nectar rich flowers – essential food for butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects.



## Tips on how to make an insect home with a group

- Discuss the best place for the insect home, taking into consideration forthcoming plans for the shared space.
- Source pallets or framework wooden material before you start, but then suggest that everyone brings their own junk and recycled materials to the session; give them guidelines on what sort of thing works.
- Arrange a tidy up of your plot, so that you can use natural materials like stems and leaves.
- Get a few stronger members of the team to put the pallets and heavy items in place, or to do a framework, then invite everyone else, including kids, to stuff the other materials into the holes.

