



Make Your Own Bug Hotel!

Who loves bugs? We do! Bugs help decompose natural materials like wood and leaves, spreading nutrients that help keep forests healthy. Bugs also are an important step in the food chain, nourishing many of our favorite birds, amphibians and mammals. Learn more about bugs by building your own bug hotel and watching them work.

Materials Needed

- A plastic water or soda bottle
- Scissors or a sharp knife
- Natural materials that won't get soggy or break down too quickly like: sticks, pine/fir cones, bark, moss, lichen, or bamboo
- Optional: twine/string

How to Build Your Bug Hotel

1. Cut both ends off a plastic bottle (*get a grown-up to help you with this part if it's tricky and be careful, the edges of the plastic can be sharp*).
2. Organize your materials in groups by size and texture.
3. If you plan to hang your bug hotel, loop some garden twine around it before you start the inside layers. (*It can be fun to build one for the ground and one to hang to see if they attract different creatures.*)
4. Start layering your materials inside the bottle. You want to stuff things in and make it all nice and firm so it doesn't fall out.
5. Hang the hotel in a tree, find a spot on the ground in your garden, or do one of each!
6. Watch for bugs!



Additional Learning Resources

Many see insects as pests, but how many of you think bugs could be a good thing for your backyard or garden? Any good reasons?

Pollination, eating pest bugs, and breaking down plant matter to build good soil are the 3 top reasons bugs are good for your garden.

Can you name some pollinators?

Wild bees and hover flies (these look like bees, but have 2 wings instead of 4) are two important pollinators in your garden. Adults feed on nectar and pollen, larvae eat aphids and mealybugs.

You can attract these beneficial insects by planting plants and flowers that have a longer bloom season or planting new flowers each spring, summer, and fall. A few garden plants that attract bees or hover flies are basil, cotoneaster, English lavender, dill, cilantro, broccoli, caraway, coriander, thyme, marjoram, rosemary, and wallflower.

Can you name some types of beetles you might see in your backyard?

Backyard beetles like ladybugs and ground beetles are great to have around because they eat aphids, mealybugs, spider mites, and Colorado potato beetles. Ground beetles can be found in your backyard right now! Look under logs, rocks, decaying plant matter, and compost piles. They eat pests in your grass—like insect larvae, slug eggs, snail eggs, and cutworm eggs.

Planting cornflower, dill, lupine, chamomile, common and Fern-leaf yarrow will draw in lady bugs to tackle the pests in your garden. Planting perennial ground covers or clover will increase your ground beetle population.

Have you ever seen a lacewing, dragon fly or damsel fly?

Lacewings are great to have around because their larvae feed on aphids, moth and caterpillar eggs, and mites. Dragon flies and damsel flies feed on mosquitoes and gnats they find around ponds and puddles.

Planting dill, coriander, angelica, or clover will attract Lacewings to your garden or backyard. A small wading pool or bird feeder will attract dragon flies and damsel flies.

Why make a bug hotel?

Building a bug hotel for your yard will attract beneficial bugs to live in so they can start pollinating your flowers and eating pest bugs. A bug hotel could also bring in the pest bugs the good bugs need for a food source. Bug hotels should be placed close to your garden or area you want the good bugs to focus on. Somewhere shielded from wind is also important.

Remember, not all bugs are bad!

Need support with this activity or have additional questions? Contact the Olympia Parks, Arts and Recreation Stewardship and Environmental Education team at:

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