

How to help reverse insect declines

The news of insect declines is alarming, and many of our vital species are threatened. However, individual actions can save insects. If you do your part with some of the actions suggested below, you will soon see an increase in beneficial insects in your garden and local area – it all adds up!

Flower power

Flowers are great for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and beetles, which use the nectar and pollen for food.

The best plants for our UK species are those that grow naturally in the wild. You can buy wildflower seed mixes from many garden centres. Alternatively, non-native plants with high nectar output can attract a lot of species. Buddleia shrubs, Nicotinia, Valerian, Verbena, Sedum, and Hebes are all great. Make sure you buy from garden centres that do not use pesticides.



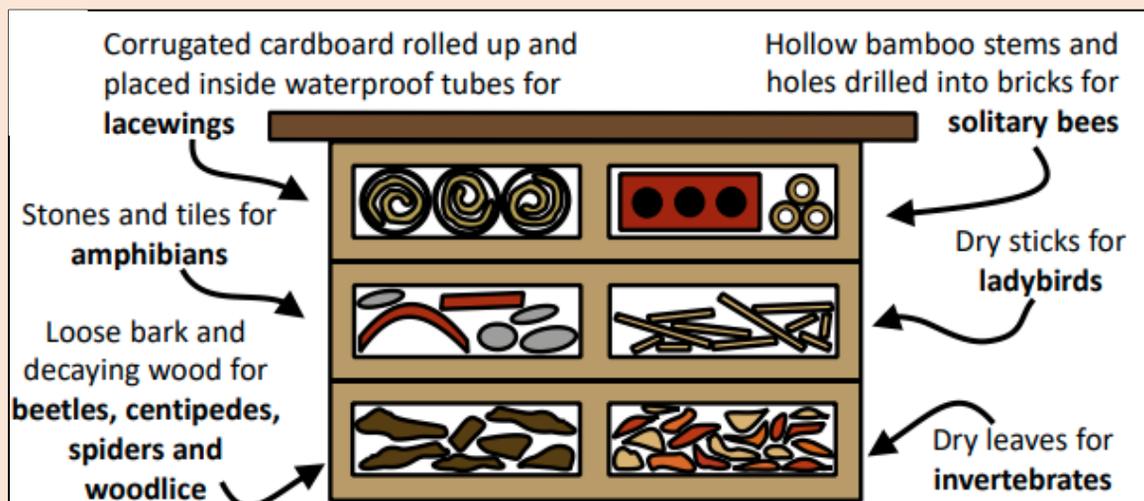
Say no to the mow



Mown lawns may be neat, but they're very boring for biodiversity! Try leaving areas of your lawn unmown. A wavy line between areas not only looks nice, but also helps create different microhabitats for insects. You can alternate areas year to year, to stop it becoming too overgrown. Don't forget that so called weeds are actually wildflowers, which our native insects love. Peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, painted lady and comma caterpillars all love nettles. If your lawn has few flowering plants, you can poke holes with a fork and seed directly with grassland wildflowers. You will soon see many fascinating species of insects move into your garden!

Create new homes

Many insects need to shelter, to hibernate, breed, or just chill out! Creating log or stick piles will provide a home for many bugs. You can even create a bug hotel with old wooden boxes or pallets, filling gaps with an array of materials to hide in.



A pond is a fantastic habitat for many exciting insect species, from dragonflies to water beetles! But even a small pot or shallow dish can help insects to thrive, especially on hot days. Make sure you add pebbles or rocks in a shallow area, for insects to safely drink from.

Don't reach for the spray

There are many natural ways to control pests in your home and garden. For example, you can use beer traps and straw to protect your plants from slugs; use beaded or net curtains to stop mosquitoes and flies coming into the house, and vinegar traps for flies in the house. You can buy fake wasps nests to deter invaders, if wasps bother your garden picnics. Any maybe learn to love spiders, they control pests for you, for free!

Use environmentally friendly detergents

Washing vehicles, or the outside of your house can create runoff that goes straight into local waterways, unlike the waste water in your home. Likewise de-icer, windscreen wash and other products in your car can make their way into local waterways when you are on the road. Cleaning products have a lot of chemicals harmful to aquatic life, check the labels, and try to use safer and biodegradable products.

Turn off those lights

Outdoor lights can be useful for humans, but are very confusing to moths and other species that are attracted to light. Declines in night-flying moths, and reduction in the breeding success of fireflies have both been linked to light pollution.



Try to remember to use outdoor lighting only when you need it – it will save money too! If you must use lights, you can add a motion detector, shield the upward glare (which attracts moths passing over), and use amber or red bulbs, that insects are less attracted to.

Shop smart

Farmers do want to help nature, but they need your support. The actions that farmers do to conserve wildlife can mean that their crops are less productive, or that they lose land area that could grow crops. Buying produce that has the LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) marque accreditation shows that the food has been produced with nature friendly farming. You can also buy organic to support farmers in using less chemicals that may harm insects. And try not to mind too much when you find the odd insect in your food, if they're still on it, it probably means it was produced in an insect friendly way!



Spread the word!

Tell your friends, family and colleagues how to do their part for insects. Maybe you can create wild areas at your workplace? Or even encourage your local council to reduce mowing and herbicide use and turn streetlights off in residential areas when unnecessary.

Mostly, tell people how great insects are, for all they do for us, and how beautiful, fascinating, and amazing they are – the more individual action, the quicker we can turn declines around!