

Not All Bugs Are Bad

Good bugs are your pest control allies.

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Fact Sheet-12-24

Of the more than one million types of insects in the world, less than 5 percent are harmful. Some insects can be nuisances but don't cause plant damage. Beneficial (good) insects are important tools for managing insect pests in your yard. Almost every insect pest has one or more natural enemies that reduce its population when it gets out of control.

Beneficial insects are natural enemies against insect pests. They kill or reduce the numbers of bad insects in your yard. Learn to recognize them (see the photo gallery at www.manageNVpests.info). These good

guys will hang around your yard if you treat them well.

The balance between good and bad insects is critical to a healthy landscape. Most people are unaware of the relationship between good and bad insects in their yard until the relationship is disrupted, and insect pests begin eating their plants. A change in weather patterns, use of a pesticide or even removal of a shrub that provides cover can disrupt the balance between good and bad insects. You can minimize this imbalance by keeping your plants vigorous and healthy throughout the year.

Insect management does not mean killing every pest insect in your yard. Eliminating all pest insects reduces your population of beneficial insects. Pest insects attract the good insects that eat them. The key is to find a level you can tolerate and let nature take its course.

Beneficial insects are available commercially for release into your garden. You must follow label directions carefully for good results. Insects released in your garden may not stick around if they find food, shelter or water elsewhere.



David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

Ladybird beetles are easy-to-recognize beneficial insects.

Tips for boosting populations of good insects:

- ▶ **Plant more flowers.** Flowers attract and provide nectar and shelter for good insects.
- ▶ **Provide a source of fresh water.** A bird bath or shallow container of water will do the trick.
- ▶ **Use lures to attract good insects.** Many use chemicals that emit the scent of a specific pest insect.
- ▶ **Use insecticides only as a last resort.** They can kill your good insects.
- ▶ **Accept a level of pest insects that will attract more good insects.** The beneficial insects need something to eat.
- ▶ **Know before you act.** Identify the insect before you take action so you don't do more harm than good.



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*These insects may look scary,
but they are really your friends.*



D.Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

Don't be fooled! This is a syrphid fly (shown right), not a wasp. It sips nectar, but the larva (shown left) eats aphids, thrips, and other sucking insects.



F. Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



W. Hanson Mazet, UNCE

The dragon-like larva (lower left in photo) of the adult ladybird beetle (above in photo) is a voracious aphid-eater.



W. Hanson Mazet, UNCE

The praying mantis (shown above) may look like an alien being, but occurs throughout North America. It eats many garden pests, including earwigs, leafhoppers and squash bugs.



W. Hanson Mazet, UNCE

This snakefly (above left) looks like something out of Alice in Wonderland. It eats aphids, psyllids, scales and other soft-bodied insects. Its larvae (above right) are voracious pest predators but harmless to humans.



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