

Plants that attract beneficial insects



Managing pests in your garden using natural control methods is nothing new. This type of control has been around for hundreds of years as opposed to inorganic pesticides which are relatively new on the scene.

Biological control is best explained as, when beneficial insects are attracted into your garden to suppress nuisance insects. Encouraging these good guys helps to maintain a healthy balance between the good and bad guys which avoids the use of insecticides.

The beneficial insects in the garden include:

- Lacewings
- Ladybirds (eat aphids)
- Hoverflies (pollinator)
- Ground beetles
- Bees (pollinator)
- Dragon Flies
- Slaters (Break down dead woody things in the compost or mulch)
- Spiders (keep fly numbers in balance)
- Centipedes
- Ichneumon wasps (keep caterpillar numbers in balance)

The pest insects in the garden include:

- Aphids
- Mites
- White Fly
- Scale
- Green beetles
- Carrot Fly
- Caterpillars
- Mealy Bug
- Millipedes
- Thrip

Flowers which are small and open tend to be more attractive to the good guys, as most have short tongues! Here is a list of some easy to grow perennials and vegetables to grow to tempt them into your garden:

- Buckwheat
- Carrot flower *
- Parsley *
- Queen Anne's lace *
- Fennel
- Cosmos
- Marigold
- Brassica
- Buttercup
- Cereals
- Sweet cicely *
- Hazel
- Broad Bean
- Lupin
- Alyssum
- Echinacea (cone Flower)
- Elecampane
- Yarrow *
- Echium
- Phacelia
- Nettles
- Echioms
- Rudbeckia
- Coriander
- Borage

**All Apiacae plants (A.K.A umberliferus the ones with the umbrella type flower head) are great.*

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Native New Zealand plants which attract the beneficial insects include Muehlenbeckia, Pittosporum, Ribbonwood, Cabbage Tree, Manuka and Hebes.

The secret to having the good guys visiting and staying for the duration of the growing season is to provide beneficial flowers from spring to late summer. This will involve planting every month to provide a continuous source of nectar or pollen. Obviously don't use any broad insecticide spray as you will wipe out the good with the bad. Lastly try to provide refuges such as long grass, a wildflower and weed corner or hedges so they will over winter in your garden.

Remember in an organic garden you are working towards an ecological balance. To achieve this you need some pests to provide food for the good guys. Don't be too concerned if you have a healthy supply of aphids or caterpillars on some plants, this is all part of the natural cycle and the beneficial insects will soon build up their numbers to keep everything in balance. This is the way ecosystems have operated naturally for millions of years.