

Beneficial Insects

Recruit nature's own pest control team

DIFFICULTY Easy

TYPE Ongoing practice

TIME Planning + ongoing habitat provision



DIFFICULTY
Easy



TIME
Ongoing



COST
Low



BEST SEASON
Year-round
habitat, most
active spring–
autumn



FREQUENCY
Continuous once
established

01 Predators need a reason to stay

Ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies, and predatory wasps only stick around a garden that offers them food (some pests are fine, in moderation) and habitat — a totally pest-free, sterile garden won't attract or keep them.



ladybird preys on aphids

pest on the plant, beneficial moves in

02 What you'll need

- A diverse range of flowering plants, especially small-flowered species (dill, fennel, alyssum, yarrow)
- Some tolerance for a low level of pest presence, which sustains predator populations
- Shelter — leaf litter, log piles, or dedicated insect hotels
- Avoidance of broad-spectrum pesticides that kill beneficials alongside pests

04 Troubleshooting

- **Beneficial insects not showing up** — check for sufficient flowering diversity and shelter; it can take a season or two to establish.
- **Still seeing high pest pressure despite beneficials present** — predator populations take time to build up in response to a pest outbreak; patience is needed, or intervene directly on severe outbreaks.
- **Accidentally killing beneficials with a treatment** — always identify the actual pest and choose the most targeted treatment available.
- **Not sure what's beneficial vs pest** — take time to learn the common beneficial insects for your region; many predatory larvae look quite different from the adult form.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Organic Pest Control

Companion Planting Principles

COMMON MISTAKES

Eliminating all visible pests immediately, leaving nothing for predators to eat

Using broad-spectrum sprays that kill beneficials along with the target pest

PRO TIP

Dill, fennel, and yarrow left to flower are among the most effective, low-effort beneficial insect magnets for a vegetable garden.

03 Method

1. Plant a diverse range of flowering species, prioritising small, open flowers that many beneficial insects favour.
2. Let a small amount of pest presence persist rather than eliminating every pest immediately — predators need prey to stay.
3. Provide shelter — leaf litter, a log pile, or a simple insect hotel.
4. Avoid or minimise broad-spectrum sprays, which harm beneficials as much as pests.
5. Be patient — building a resident beneficial insect population takes a season or more to establish.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Establish habitat and flowering diversity from the start of the season, ideally as a permanent garden feature.
DURATION	A season or more to build an established resident beneficial population.
MAINTENANCE	Maintain flowering diversity and shelter continuously; avoid broad-spectrum sprays.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Visible ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies, and similar insects present in the garden, and pest outbreaks that resolve on their own more often.