

SECAD Green Your Community

Insect Hotel Habitat



The basic structure

It is best to use old pallets for the basic structure. The more you can use recycled or reclaimed materials the better. The habitat does not need to be more than 5 pallets high. It is best to use pallets that are all the same size. Place the bottom lappet upside down; this creates larger openings at the ends which can be used as a hedgehog house. Although the structure should be stable, you might want to secure each pallet to the one below.

Where to build your habitat

Many invertebrates like cool damp conditions, so you can site your habitat in semi-shade, by a hedge or under a tree. Putting the habitat close to other wildlife features, such as an overgrown hedge, a shrubbery or a pond will make it easier for small creatures to find it. Not all creatures like to be in the shade: solitary bees like a warm sunny spot, so put tubes for bees on the sunniest side of the habitat or put them elsewhere in the garden. Choose a level, even surface: the hotel may end up fairly heavy so it will need a firm base.

Filling the gaps

There are many different ways to fill the gaps in the structure, here are some suggestions:

DEAD WOOD is an increasingly rare habitat as we tidy our gardens, parks and amenity woodlands. It is essential for the larvae of wood-boring beetles, such as the stag beetle. It also supports many fungi, which help breakdown the woody material. Crevices under the bark hold centipedes and woodlice.

STRAW AND HAY provide many opportunities for invertebrates to burrow in and find safe hibernation sites.

DRY LEAVES provide a home for a variety of invertebrates; this mimics the litter on the forest floor.

LOOSE BARK is a preferred habitat for beetles, centipedes, spiders and woodlice. Woodlice and millipedes help to break down woody plant material; they are an essential component of the garden recycling system.

CREVICES provide a safe place for invertebrates to hibernate throughout the winter. The insect hotel has many different types of crevices and crannies that different species of invertebrates can hide in over winter.

HOLES FOR SOLITARY BEES. Hollow stems such as old bamboo canes or holes drilled into blocks of wood make good nest sites for solitary bees. Holes of different diameters mean many different species can be catered for. Solitary bees like warmth so place these hollows on the south facing side of the habitat. Bees use different ways to seal their egg chambers; look out for canes blocked with dried mud or bits of leaves.

FROG HOLE. Although frogs need a pond to breed in, they can spend most of the year out of water. You can use stone and tiles as these provide the cool damp conditions amphibians need. Newts may also take advantage of these conditions. Amphibians need a frost free place to spend the winter; the centre of your insect hotel would provide an ideal habitat.

LADYBIRDS hibernate over winter; include dry sticks and leaves in the hotel to provide a perfect habitat for them.

NECTAR PRODUCING PLANTS provide essential food for butterflies, bees and many other flying insects. Planting nectar-rich flowers around your habitat will encourage more wildlife.