

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Backyard Bug Habitats

Creating a living space for insects in your yard can help increase animal diversity, help plant get pollinated, and draw in beneficial insects that can help manage pests. Fortunately, insects and their relatives have similar requirements as other animals, so you may need to make a few slight adjustments to things you may already have to make it more bug-friendly.

Plants a.k.a. food

- Provide pollen, nectar, and host plants (including trees & grasses) throughout spring through fall & plan for a succession of bloom times using native plants
- Plant “clumps” of same plants for maximum attraction
- Include a variety of colors & flower shapes
- Avoid modern hybrid plants (these may not have pollen, nectar, or fragrance for pollinators)
- Include larval host plants in the landscape (be aware that insects will eat them!)
- Ensure plants are insecticide free



Water

- Create a damp salt lick for bees & butterflies. Use a drip hose or irrigation line, or place a bird bath/ dish on the ground. Add soil, a bit of sea salt or wood ashes, and enough water to make the area damp.
- Add a nectar source with a hummingbird feeder (four parts water to one part sugar). Clean feeder regularly to avoid mold.
- Insects need resources other than nectar. Some like foodstuffs such as moist animal droppings, urine, and rotting fruits. Add overripe bananas, citrus or other fruits to a suet feeder and hang in a tree.
- Place a sponge in a dish of lightly salted (sea salt) water to discover which insects come to investigate.



Shelter

- Design the landscape so plants are layered when mature – canopy (trees), lower canopy, shrubs, grasses, herbaceous plants (herbs, vegetables, flowers)
- Leave a little “mess” – logs, snags, twig bundles, and leaves can create nesting areas for native bees
- Rocks and bare (unmulched) soil
- Add handmade or “artificial” habitats (NOTE: these should be sheltered and east to southeast facing)



For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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