



# PROTECTING INSECTS

How to help the smaller species



Intensive farming, loss and destruction of habitat, light pollution at night – these are some of the reasons for the rapid decline in insect life. Numerous insect species have already gone extinct and many more are seriously endangered. It is estimated that the insect population has been decimated by over 70% in the last 30 years.

Granted, insects can be a bit of a nuisance for us humans, but they play a hugely important role on this planet – not least for survival of the human species! They pollinate the flowers of both wild and cultivated plants and are therefore crucial for global food security. They are also a direct food source for many animals. The decline in insects is responsible for the increasing decline in other species such as birds, fish or bats. Many insects are also nature’s recycling professionals as they convert organic material such as dead wood,



carcasses and faeces into reusable raw materials. Last but not least, they also serve as beneficial organisms that help keep agricultural pests in check. In fact, organic farming is dependent on this cycle.

**Fact:** Insects need our help! Each and everyone of us can and should make a contribution – be it on our balconies, in the garden or with our personal purchasing decisions. But how can we do it? Read this guide to find out.

## BUY ORGANIC PRODUCE

By consuming organic produce, we can promote insect diversity and at the same time do something that is beneficial to our own health. The use of chemical-synthetic spraying agents or fertilisers is not allowed in organic farming. The guidelines for organic farming prohibit the toxic substances that are used against insects and weeds in conventional agriculture. Because of this, organic agriculture provides a home for many types of insects.



## CLOSE-TO-NATURE BALCONY OR GARDEN

It doesn't matter whether you only have a small balcony or a large garden: You can support insects even in the smallest of corners. Here are just a few suggestions.

### Only use peat-free, organic soil

Whether for your raised bed, your kitchen herbs or other potted plants: Make sure you only use organic, peat-free soil. The extraction of peat destroys peatlands and with it the habitat for many animals and plants.



### Choose insect-friendly plants

When buying plants, make sure that you choose insect-friendly ones. You might find a particular plant pretty – but that doesn't mean that bees and other insects like it too. Double-flowered plants (also known as 'filled flowers') such as roses and dahlias may appeal to us because of the way they look – but they will be of no use to insects. If you want to get it right for the insects, then simply choose native wild plants.

### Work with the seasons

Insects need nectar from spring to autumn. Plant a variety of plants, from early bloomers to summer and autumn flowers. If you ensure that there always is something in bloom, insects will have a steady source of food.



### Allow herbs to flower

We love herbs. So do insects – but only once they start flowering. Unfortunately, the standard recommendation for herbs is not to let them flower as it might affect the harvest. Herb flowers, however, are important for insects – and they are also pleasing to our eyes.

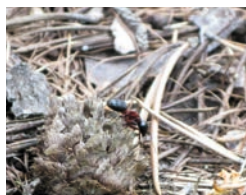


### Choose native rather than non-native plants

You will find non-native plants in many gardens. Sadly, these offer very little value for nature, if any. In contrast, native plants which are suited to the location provide food and protection for animals throughout the year. They are also usually more resilient against extreme weather conditions and often more affordable.

### Provide small deadwood corners

It might sound strange, but deadwood is actually one of the liveliest habitats in nature! Many insects benefit from deadwood, be it as a hiding place, as building material or even as a food source. Using decaying tree trunks, piles of leaves in a wind-protected location or pith-containing twigs such as those of blackberry perennials or elderberries, you can create wonderful habitats for a wide variety of small animals.



### Don't use chemicals or traps for so-called 'pests'

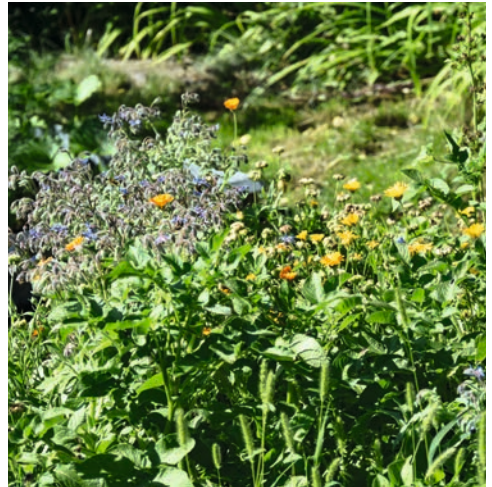
Admittedly, no one will be delighted to discover aphids or black-vine weevils in their garden. Nevertheless, insecticides should be avoided, as they also harm beneficial organisms. You can use effective natural means and methods to combat unwanted guests.

Please also avoid using insect traps (including glue traps, electric traps, anti-bug plug-ins etc). Instead, use the effect of the essential oils of certain plants to your advantage. Lavender, lemongrass, garlic, basil, tomatoes, lemon balm and rosemary are among numerous plants whose scent repels gnats and mosquitoes.

### Wild meadow instead of a manicured lawn

Don't overdo it when mowing the lawn. If you must mow, increase the intervals so you can create a new habitat for insects, since nectar- and pollen-containing wild herbs such as daisies, dandelion, clover, Lamium (dead-nettles) or Veronica can only grow under such circumstances. These plants are valuable to insects, but frequent mowing prevents them from blooming.

If you can, try and create wild corners in your garden, where you rarely use a lawn mower and nature can unfold undisturbed.



### Garden pond

Even if you don't have the space for a large garden pond, a mini pond will be welcome by insects and birds, especially on hot summer days. You will find instructions on how to construct a mini pond on the websites of most nature conservation associations.



### Watering holes for insects

Water is essential for survival – even for the smallest of animals. So why not provide a watering hole for bees and their insect friends? To prevent the watering hole from becoming a trap, offering several safe landing spots and shallow access. A simple plant pot saucer will serve this purpose perfectly. Add a few stones, twigs and some moss to offer bees, butterflies and many other insects some much-appreciated water. Do remember to regularly top it up with fresh water and to empty and refill it occasionally to keep it clean. If you decorate it nicely, an insect watering place can also look very pretty in your garden or balcony. Whether pretty or not – the insects will definitely be grateful!



### No unnecessary light sources

Many insects are nocturnal. They are attracted to light sources and will often fly around them to exhaustion. They also may come into direct contact with the light source and injure or even burn themselves. Light also makes them more visible to predators such as shrews, toads, and spiders. Unnecessary light sources can therefore cause damage, even in close-to-nature areas.

### Don't use robotic lawnmowers, leaf blowers, etc.

They might seem practical to us – but they will often be deadly to nature. Insects and other small animals are regularly shredded to death by leaf blowers, robotic lawnmowers, and grass trimmers. Scythe/sickle or, for larger areas, a cutter bar mower are good alternatives. Unfortunately, our sense of order and aesthetics often goes against the needs of nature. Leave leaves where they fall or use a rake to pile them under a bush or tree. This way you can create a welcome habitat for all kinds of animals – including hedgehogs.

## CONCLUSION

We all can easily help the fight against the decline of the insect population by providing food sources and habitat for bees and other insects. This guide is meant to provide some inspiration to get you started, but there are countless other ways to help the insects, and you will find that the Internet is full of valuable and, above all, more pertinent tips.

**Become an animal rescuer – even the smallest animals deserve to be looked after.  
Because every life matters.**



**NetAP** – Network for Animal Protection

Vogelsangstrasse 32

CH – 8133 Esslingen/ZH

Schweiz

Tel. +41 (0)44 202 68 68

[info@netap.ch](mailto:info@netap.ch)

[www.netap.ch](http://www.netap.ch)

[www.facebook.com/netap.ch](https://www.facebook.com/netap.ch)

Postkonto: 85-788418-5

IBAN: CH52 0900 0000 8578 8418 5

© 2022 **NetAP** – Network for Animal Protection