

Pest, Predator, or Pollinator?

Do you know your garden guests from your garden pests? While some visitors are unwelcome pests, many organisms are beneficial – either as pollinators or natural predators of pests.

Here's some handy info on the wide diversity of garden critters.



Ground Beetles feed on soil dwelling pests such as slugs and caterpillars. They are typically black or brown, and often have ridges running along their hard wing cases (elytra). Encourage these natural predators into your garden by providing their favourite hide-outs; log piles and leaf litter.



Vine Weevils are a pest that attack a wide range of plants, leaving small notches in the leaves. The larvae of this species can also cause damage to plant roots.



Swift Moth Caterpillars are pests that live in the soil and nibble away at plant roots and the base of plant stems. Cultivating the soil can help to expose these pests to predators, such as birds, can reduce the damage they do.



Large Cabbage White Caterpillars as the name suggests, are pests that love to munch on brassica crops. Butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of leaves, from which the caterpillars hatch a couple of weeks later. Try using butterfly proof netting to limit their damage.



Butterflies, such as this Peacock, are pollinators that frequently visit gardens and allotments. Buddleia is a great plant for attracting butterflies to your garden, so much so that its common name is 'butterfly bush'.



Honeybees are important pollinators of many plants. They live in colonies of several thousand individuals, and visit flowers to collect pollen to feed to their young and nectar which they use to make delicious honey.



Ladybird larvae can munch through between 100-150 aphids per day and so are a voracious natural predator.



Ladybird adults also predate on aphids making them a gardeners best friend! Encourage them into your garden by providing log piles or an overgrown corner for hibernating adults to shelter in.



Slugs and snails are not too picky about which plants they feed on, making them a problematic pest for many gardeners. Some species do play a role in breaking down vegetative matter though, and of course they provide a tasty treat for garden birds!



Thick-legged flower beetles are pollinators which visit flowers such as ox-eye daisies to feed on pollen. Look out for them in your gardens between April and September.



Lacewing adults and larvae are excellent natural predators which feed on aphids, mites, thrips and caterpillar eggs. The larvae are nicknamed 'aphid lions' because of their huge appetites!



Bumblebees are important pollinators of many garden plants. There are 25 different species of bumblebee in the UK. The majority live in colonies under the ground, except for one species, the tree bumblebee which lives in cavities in trees, or sometimes even bird boxes.



Rosy Apple Aphids are pests of apple trees, which live on the underside of leaves and feed on the foliage and small fruit in early Spring. Earwigs can provide a natural control solution.



Solitary bees pollinate many different plants and there are 250 different species in the UK. They are very diverse in appearance and nesting habitat-some live underground, whereas others nest in old plant stems. Encourage them into your garden by providing a home-made bee hotel.



Whitefly are sap-sucking insect pests which are a particular problem in greenhouses.



Rosemary beetles are very distinctive pests, with their stripy metallic carapace. Both the adults and larvae feed on the foliage of plants such as rosemary, lavender, sage and thyme.



Hoverfly adults are flower-visitors which pollinate flowers. There are 280 species in the UK, many of which are excellent bee-mimics. Their larvae feed on a wide-range of foods, including decaying matter and insects. Some species have aquatic larvae—you can encourage these into your garden by providing containers or 'lagoons' for them to lay their eggs in.



Hoverfly larvae are often predatory, with many species feeding on aphids, thrips and other sap-feeding pests.



Cutworm is the name given to pest caterpillars of several different moth species which feed at the base of the stems of several different plants, often severing the roots.



Scarlett Lily Beetles and their larvae are pests of lily and fritillary foliage. They are active from early Spring and into late Summer, so keep an eye on your lilies and fritillaries from March onwards.

