

# 5 Keys to Invite Beneficials into Your Garden



Partner ***with*** Mother Nature  
and let her do the garden work for you!

**Grow Your Own Vegetables**

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## Introduction

Welcome! If you're here, it's because you are looking to partner with Mother Nature to co-create a healthy, vibrant garden ecosystem for you, your loved ones, and the planet. You want your garden to be strong and resilient so you can get the healthiest food possible with the least amount of effort. But where do you start?

You start with creating a healthy partnership with nature. As you partner with nature correctly and deepen your relationship, you'll find nature is doing most of the garden work for you. If you want nature to support you, you have to support nature. That's why I created this quick guide: so you can get started supporting and co-creating a thriving, diverse, and balanced ecosystem with nature. - Crystal Meserole



### 1 Mindset



A lot of growers have adopted a mentality that pests are bad. What's more is that a lot of new growers see all insects as a threat to their fresh food supply. But the reality is that most insect species in your garden are either beneficial or benign. How much is most? Anywhere between 95 and 97%! In addition to most of the insect species being either beneficial or benign, if you have no pests in your garden, then you have no food for the beneficial insects that help create a balanced ecosystem.

Adopting a mentality that doesn't try to eliminate species that compete for your food crops, but instead seeks management and ecosystem balance, can help you on your journey to a thriving garden and alleviate the pressure and stress that your garden success is all on your shoulders.

### 2 Trap Crops

While you want some pests, it's ideal if you don't have them eating the food in your garden, right? One of the strategies you can use to reduce pests in your garden while still keeping the beneficials around is to plant trap crops away from your garden. These are crops that pests are attracted to the most. When you plant them away from your garden, you're distracting pests with a neon sign that says, "The Feast is Over Here!"

One of the questions growers often ask is, "What crops do I plant as trap crops?" If you've had a garden before, then you probably know which plants in your garden have been attacked by pests. You can start with those and use old seed for these trap crop areas. If you're new to gardening or not sure which crops to plant, brassicas such as kale, collards, and cabbage are good trap crops that a wide range of pests are attracted to.





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## 3 Fill the Void

Trap crops will only help you if you have the beneficials there to prey on the insects that want your food. If you don't have the predators, then trap crops will become a breeding ground for the pests and create infestations.

The good news is, if you don't already have the beneficial populations in your garden, you can get them! There are many online garden stores that carry beneficial insects to release in the garden. Here's one of my favorite companies — [Check out all the beneficials they carry!](#) Be sure to follow the instructions carefully and release your beneficials when the temperatures and weather will support their population.



## 4 The 30% Rule

You can add all the beneficials you want, but if you don't have a habitat for them, then they're not going to stick around. In addition to planting trap crops and keeping some pests for their food supply, you'll also want to plant flowers and perennial herbs for your beneficials so they can have protection from predators and a place to overwinter. But how many perennial herbs and flowers should you have?

My garden mentor and Grow Your Own Vegetables founder, Stacey Murphy, shares a good rule of thumb: allot 30% of your garden space to flowers and perennial herbs. This doesn't just help the garden protectors--it also supports the pollinators!

## 5 Protect & Support

Asking beneficials for support and protection means protecting and supporting them. You're planting trap crops and keeping some of their food supply around, but sometimes, pests can get out of control. When that happens, growers often panic and resort to sprays and dusts.

Avoiding sprays and dusts seems like a no-brainer, but even organic sprays such as neem oil and essential oil sprays can hurt beneficials. Just remember that these can have long term consequences. You may find you invite a cascade of imbalances and have to re-establish the beneficial population all over again. You'll have to decide for yourself if the short term gains are worth the potential long term costs. If you're considering using a spray or dust, exercise restraint and caution, and use only as a very last resort.



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