

## **Bug Hotels: Inviting Beneficial Insects**

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Whilst my husband and I traveled in northern England last fall, we were delighted to encounter the most unusual hotels: Bug Inns. Immediately, I was inspired! It became our mission to create a Bug Hotel of our own upon returning to Oregon.

As soon as we stepped foot back at home, Brian and I began our planning our Bug Inn. At a gift shop in England, I found a children's' book about Bug Hotels that is very informative. It describes different materials and what insects they attract. And I did a little research online with happy results in finding a helpful YouTube describing how to make a Bug Hotel. Bingo! All set!

We didn't want to buy new wood to build the structure from scratch. Keeping our eyes on the lookout for scraps of wood didn't get us very far, so, a trip to Goodwill solved the issue of the building. We bought a small cabinet with one drawer at top for \$8.00 and off we flew. Brian removed the drawer, reinforced the shelf, and created dividers for the top and bottom sections. Less is more, at least for this first attempt, so we decided on just four sections total. Eventually, we plan to build a rooftop to create another section.

Once the framework was set, we collected materials. My sister donated some nice hay for ladybugs, and Brian bought some untreated logs, that he drilled holes in, for beetles. We had several bamboo poles as well as last year's giant sunflower stems that were hollow, so Brian set about with his brawn to saw them the right size for the Mason Bees section. In the last part, I broke a couple clay pots, gathered rocks, and added some sticks for snails and spiders. On the top, for now, I thought it attractive to place some spreading thyme plants that will hopefully climb on the roof and spread.

Our motivation was not only for our own fun, however. We share this concept and our experience with our community to spread the joy in hopes others will, as a wonderful family project, embark on the building of Bug Hotels. But, most importantly, why? Why make a Bug Inn?

With rampant development, we lose vital ecosystems that keep life in balance. By creating our lovely lawns and impeccable yards, we also create an almost sterile environment that is bereft of contributing insects. Think: birds, for example. Chic-a-dees, Flickers, Robins, to name a few depend on juicy insects and healthy, living soils to live. When we destroy those in favor of our perfect yards, we create a non-living zone. Birds are in decline all over the world. Do you want to do something to help them? Well, start with a Bug Hotel!

Also, we are taught to think the word "insect" is bad. There are many helpful insects! There are those that eat bugs that destroy our plants and gardens. Ladybugs, for example, chow down aphids like crazy! I let loose ladybugs every year in my gardens, and I assure you, the aphids don't last. Bees and other pollinators like butterflies need places to live. By destroying niches

for them, we also reduce their numbers vastly. A Bug Hotel or Inn is one way, in addition to adding composted soil and native plants to your yard, to give them a chance to make our world a healthier one.

*One word of caution:* Bug Hotels can, of course, attract some unwanted guests. Be sure to write on your sign which bugs are welcome! Seriously, though, I recommend placing the Bug Inn at a distance from where you play or hang out. The Mason Bees don't sting so no worries there. It is possible, however, for wasps to take the bait and move in. Now, wasps and yellow jackets, the native ones, are actually very helpful pollinators but you don't necessarily want them in your yard. So, just keep an eye on it and if you notice unwanted insects, you can use eco-friendly sprays, a jet hose (at night or early dawn before they become active), or when safe, disassemble and destroy any nests. I'm only saying this because bugs are, well, bugs. Don't let this discourage you! The experience and fun of creating a Bug Hotel is worth it, and chances are you'll have caterpillars finding them cozy so you can watch butterflies or moths appear next spring!!

Please visit my website, [www.MarianneBickett.com](http://www.MarianneBickett.com), for a PDF file of this article with online resources all about bugs! Be sure to scroll down on the Art and Nature Connections Page to find it! Thank you!

Resource: Oregon State University Extension: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/pests-weeds-diseases/invasive-species>

Our Inspirations from England:



Windermere Insectopia Inn



York Bug Hotel



Munster Castle Buggingham Palace



Repurposed cabinet becomes a Bug Inn!



Great book for the family



Watercolor by Marianne Bickett (©2023) depicting invasive insects (Northern Hornet, Emerald Ash Borer, and Brown Stink Bug) overshadowing our native bees (who pollinate flowers, fruit, and other crops), native ash trees (habitat for many creatures), and an apricot (representing one of the many crops that the Stink Bug destroys).