

Make a bug hotel

It's easy to make a home for insects. Here are some ideas to try, whatever your garden size

Insects and other invertebrates make their homes anywhere they can, sheltering in the nooks and crannies they find. But not all gardens have enough appropriate areas and, if you think about a place such as a balcony garden, the landscape may be naturally hard and inhospitable.

One simple way to increase the available habitat on offer is to create a bug 'hotel'. At its most simple, this can be a tube filled with bamboo canes that offer holes and crevices of varying sizes for different invertebrates. You can buy one of these ready-made, but it's also very easy to make your own using found and recycled materials.

Mid-autumn is the perfect time to make a bug hotel. Insects such as lacewings are looking for a place to shelter during winter and, as a result, you should get quite a few residents in the coming weeks. A sunny location sheltered from the worst of the wind and wet is best for insects, but other invertebrates such as woodlice and centipedes prefer somewhere shadier, cooler and a bit damp. Where you locate your insect emporium will determine the wildlife it appeals to, but bigger hotels such as those made from wooden pallets will often provide these conditions in different parts of the structure. The key thing to remember is: the greater the variety of materials you use in its construction, the more diverse its residents will be. **O**



Made from hanging baskets held together with wire, this hotel (above) is perfect to suspend in small gardens and above balconies. Found materials such as pine cones and broken pots provide crevices for insects and adding some compost makes it possible to plant a few ivies for added appeal



Leftover bricks (right) can be piled up to make useful structures, especially when packed with smaller materials. Spiders may create webs across the airbricks and other invertebrates will find their way into the finer stems and seedheads wedged between



Sheltered from rain, these drilled logs (left) can provide overwintering homes for solitary bees. The addition of finer materials offers appealing space for spiders. Several bee hotels distributed around the garden are thought to be more effective than just one hotel. Drill holes in logs 2-10mm diameter and with a slight upward angle



A section of old drainpipe (left) is stuffed with cut bamboo canes and is already occupied. Solitary bees such as leafcutters are among those that have laid eggs in the hollow centres, capping off the ends with sections of foliage



A stack of recycled pallets (left) makes a great place to hold multiple layers of different materials. The shadier, damper basement with finer materials is perfect for woodlice and springtails, while the upper drier stalks and holes are ideal for solitary bees