**Constructing an Insect hotel**

Predators and pollinators are beneficial in our gardens. Building them a safe refuge will provide a home and shelter for insects and their eggs or offspring. Both pollinators and predators will use the insect hotel.

Insect hotels can be made from recycled materials, and are fun to make. They can be elaborate or simple. The roof and walls can be constructed from recycled crate, corrugated iron, biscuit tin, wood or another recycled vessel. Make sure your insect hotel is waterproof as the occupants will need to be kept dry.

Different insects prefer different bedding material. Do your research and provide a variety of materials for different type of insects. If your insect hotel is quite large you can mix it up a little and provide different materials in each layer.

Here are some ideas for bedding material.

**Rotting logs**- this attracts wood boring beetles. Their larvae eat the decaying wood. They enjoy damp wood so it would be ideal to have it at the base of your hotel to keep the logs damp. This area can be mixed with decaying plant matter such as leaf litter to attract centipedes (which eat slugs) and other small insects such as millipedes and slaters (woodlice) which in turn are food for birds. Garden spiders will also take advantage of leaf litter.

**Dry drilled wood and bricks with holes**- this attracts solitary bees, wasps, as a perfect place to lay their eggs. Drill holes different sizes from 5mm-10mm. This offers spaces for different species.

**Bamboo canes** -hollow stems of these are perfect hiding space for solitary bees. You will see when they arrive as they lay their eggs and then seal up the hole with mud or leaf litter.

**Rolled cardboard, dried grass, and straw**- place this bedding material in a cardboard tube, plastic bottle or jar to keep it contained dry and prevent it from blowing out of the hotel. This bedding material attracts lacewings. Lacewings are beautiful, fragile looking creatures and are perfect predators for aphids and small insects, scale insects, caterpillars and mites.

**Bundles of twigs, sticks and stems**- vary the sizes of the twigs. This will attract spaces for beetles. Ground beetles will devour many pests including aphids, carrot fly. Hoverflies will also be attracted to this material and are both a pollinator and a predator. Their larvae will also eat aphids and the adults feed on nectar and pollinate the flowers as they go. Twigs will also attract ladybirds. Ladybirds eat aphids and other small insects like mites. Lady bird larvae will devour many aphids in a day.

**Placing your hotel**

Like with any real estate it is all about location, location location.

Place your insect hotel in a sheltered spot in your garden, out of the wind if possible as most insects prefer a slightly damp but some like solitary bees like a dry sunny aspect. If there is an insect “hot spot” in your garden, it would be a perfect place for your hotel. But don’t restrict yourself to one, place a few hotels in different spots. Some insects prefer spots close to ponds and log piles, so adding these to your garden will also attract more insects.

Have fun with the construction, and don’t forget to hang out the WELCOME sign.