

## Beneficials Are Important By Tammy Baldwin

A balanced environment is very important to the health and vitality of every yard. By keeping this balance nature can then play out unaided by human hands. We often overuse chemicals, which can actually make the pest problem we are trying to get rid of worse. The “bad” pests tend to rebound better and quicker than your “good” bugs. And with chemical over use, the “bad” bugs can and often times do, build up a resistance to the sprays. That is why it is important to attract and encourage natural predators – beneficials – to your yard and only use chemicals as a last resort. (Remember, most chemicals are not discriminative in what they kill.) By doing this, with time you can have a healthy, balanced environment in your yard. You can also use a variety of natural sprays rather than chemicals first. (they too can be indiscriminate in what they kill.) there are many kinds of beneficials, ranging from Convergent Lady Beetles (the most common here) to birds, with many in between.

Different types of birds eat different types of pests, from aphids to caterpillars. So, it is a good choice to encourage them to your yard. A few types of beneficial are: Braconid wasps, predacious ground beetles, Convergent lady beetles, Hove (syrphid) and Flower flies and Lacewings to name just a few.

Braconid wasps are interesting looking as they have a long “stinger” that they use to inject their eggs into the bodies of their hosts. The larvae then eat from the inside out. they do not sting or bite humans. There are numerous overlapping generations of wasps produced each season. Plant pollen and nectar rich plants to encourage them.

Predacious ground beetles: They are a black, bluish, or purplish-black in color. They hide under rocks, debris, groundcovers, etc. During the day and come out at night to feed.

Various species will feed on many things, including slugs, snails, cutworms, and maggots. Try to have permanent plants and undisturbed areas. There are several varieties that are good.

Convergent lady beetles. There are many different varieties, but they are the most common variety in our area. The larvae are voracious eaters of aphids. The number of eggs the female lays depends upon the availability of prey. Plant pollen and nectar rich plants to attract.

Hover (syrphid) and flower flies. There are a number of different varieties. The hover fly is the kind you see hovering over your flowers like a hummingbird. Black oily smears of excrement on plant foliage are typical signs of syrphid fly feeding. Many generations occur each year. Plant pollen and nectar rich plants to attract.

Tachnid flies. They are large, bristly and bee or wasp like in appearance. The larvae are internal parasites and they eat their host from the inside. The adults feed on pollen and nectar.

Lacewings. The larvae are voracious eaters. They resemble light brown alligators. As many as 750 aphids may be consumed by each lacewing during its several – stage larval development. Most adults feed only on pollen, nectar, aphid honeydew, and plant fluids. Several generations are produced each season.

A few pollen and nectar rich plants are: alyssum, cosmos, sunflower, calendula daisies, dill, fennel, spearmint, wild bergamont, yarrow and clover.

All of the above mentioned beneficials I listed are good for aphids, mites, scale, and white flies- except the ground beetle it is more for slugs and snails, etc. I also only listed some

common plants that most people would grow. I have found in my yard that the alyssum, dill, fennel, cosmos, and daisies are very popular.

This is a very limited list and it doesn't include spiders or many other types of beneficials. I have found in my own yard that I rarely have to resort to chemical use (natural products) to control "bad" bugs. Occasionally there will be an outbreak but it is usually contained within a few days or so, (although the red spider mite proves to be most challenging!) I hope you find this information helpful and will encourage the good guys to your yard.

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