

Insect Balancing



You want to create balance in your garden so that no one insect or disease can do too much harm. There will always be bugs! Here are some steps you can take to keep them under control:

1. Plant a variety of plants.

Having a diversity of plants will be your first line of defense against any one insect having a population explosion. You want a mix of perennials and annuals such as these:

- Anise hyssop
- Black-eyed Susans
- Borage
- Currants
- Echinacea
- Elderberries
- Lupine
- Milkweed
- Sage
- Veronica
- Yarrow

Many of the plants on this list attract bees and other pollinators. Most also provide other functions: medicinal, culinary, edible, or aesthetic. Each plant can, and should, perform several functions, so redundancy is built into the system.

2. Attract birds to your garden.

Most birds eat insects, and many rely on them to feed their hatchlings in early spring and summer. By attracting birds to your yard, you can reduce the numbers of bugs feeding on your garden. You don't need a bird feeder to attract birds! Planting native shrubs and trees that provide food and shelter and adding a water source also works.

Mass Audubon suggests having a variety of plants in your yard to attract birds:

- Summer fruits such as mulberry and elderberry
- Autumn fruits such as bayberry and serviceberry
- Winter fruits such as Virginia creeper and winterberry
- Native grasses and perennials that provide seeds in the fall
- Nectar-producing tube-shaped flowers to attract hummingbirds and orioles
- Nut-bearing trees including oaks and beeches
- Evergreen conifers for food and shelter, especially in winter

3. Create habitat for other bug-eaters.

Toads, frogs, newts, and salamanders eat insects and are important to the ecosystem; they like damp, sheltered spaces that you can create with an arrangement of stones or a small terra-cotta pot turned on its side and partially buried. Spiders also eat insects.