

**BBC**  
**breathing**  
**places**

**a love**  
**bug**

**pocket guide**

**BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.**

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

**Go wild with Breathing Places at:**  
[bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)

**“Some say they’re small and pesky – but I say bugs are brilliant!”**

**Joel Defries**  
BBC's *Blue Peter* presenter



# Get closer to bugs

If you're one of the people who never spare a thought for bugs, prepare to be amazed. There are currently millions of species of bugs in the world and over 40,000 of these species are living in the UK. In fact, we couldn't survive without them!

Bugs come in lots of different shapes and sizes, from butterflies, beetles and bees to spiders, snails and slugs. And, though some may seem insignificant, don't be fooled by their size. Bugs may be small but they are a hardworking bunch and worth protecting.

Bugs are essential for life and play a vital role in keeping our ecosystem going: pollinating flowers and crops, aerating and nourishing the soil, providing food for other wildlife and generally maintaining the balance of nature.

# Why love a bug?

Want to create a colourful garden, balcony or window box? Think of bugs as your helpers to make your flowers bloom. And if you want amphibians, birds and mammals to visit your garden, the best invitation you can offer is a huge variety of industrious and delicious insects.

Most children are fascinated by bugs. They love pond dipping, chasing butterflies and rolling over stones and logs to find the different types of bugs hiding underneath. Though it is important to make sure that any upturned stones or logs have been replaced to their original positions.

And if that's not enough, spending time with nature is also great for your health and a perfect way to escape after a long, stressful day – relax to the sound of buzzing and know you've done your bit for wildlife.



# Which bug for which job?

Bugs love to get busy in the garden.

Bees, butterflies, wasps and hoverflies, for example, are amazing pollinators. This job is an essential one because a plant that has not been pollinated cannot produce seeds or fruits.

Other bugs are top garden pest control agents.

- Ladybirds eat about 5,000 aphids in a lifetime. What better way to keep your roses blooming!
- Each lacewing larva eats more than 1,000 aphids before turning into an adult lacewing... when it lays another 300 larvae eggs.
- Ground beetles like nothing better than munching on juicy slugs!

Woodlice, worms and millipedes aerate the soil and break down organic matter to nourish the earth so we can grow strong plants and juicy fruit and vegetables.

# Build a 'bugtropolis'

Providing shelter is a great way to help bugs. Why not:

- Put down your tools, set aside an area of your garden and let nature get on with it.
- Grow a wild flower meadow – even a small area can be effective and different grass species interspersed with wild flowers can look beautiful.
- Make a log pile – it will provide a home for beetles and offer nooks and crannies for ladybirds and bees to hibernate in.
- Create a pond for dragonflies, water beetles, pond skaters and other aquatic bugs.

Simpler still, a pile of rocks or an upside-down flowerpot make great homes for ground beetles, centipedes and spiders. Or how about hanging a bundle of hollow garden canes against a sunny wall for nesting mason bees?

Visit: [bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces) for more information on making bug homes.

# Get the buzz back – feed a bug

Flowers provide nectar and pollen for lots of different bugs. British wild flowers or traditional cottage garden flowers are best. Get seeds and plug plants from garden centres but remember to leave wild growing flowers alone – they're already helping wildlife and are protected.

There are lots of beautiful wild flowers to choose from: foxglove, meadow buttercup, cowslip, ox-eye daisy and yarrow. If you can't find wild flowers, try herbs such as rosemary, thyme and mint.

Once the wild flowers have finished flowering leave them alone. Some wild flowers will flower again the next year, while others grow one year and flower the next.

A healthy bug population will also attract other animals, from frogs and hedgehogs to bats, blue tits and predatory bugs like dragonflies, ladybirds and spiders.

# Bug bingo



So now you know a little bit more about how fascinating they really are, see how many bugs you can identify in your patch.



**Ants** – Some species of ant are vegetarian, some are carnivorous and others eat both meat and vegetation.



**Bees** – There are many different types of bee including bumblebees, honeybees and solitary bees.

**Seen**

**Seen**



**Butterflies** – There are 56 species of butterfly in the UK and all have a fascinating life cycle – from caterpillar to butterfly.

**Seen**



**Centipedes** – Centipedes are nocturnal and love the dark, so you can find them by lifting up stones or logs or digging in the ground.

**Seen**



**Ladybirds** – There are 46 different types of ladybird in the UK, usually seen March to October.

**Seen**



**Snails** – Found all over the UK, snails carry a hard shell on their back and move along on one long, slimy foot.

**Bingo!**

# Do One Thing

## Fancy trying other bug-related activities? What about these...

### **Go on a bug hunt**

Lots of organisations, including Buglife, Butterfly Conservation and The Wildlife Trusts run bug-based events. Also, look out for National Insect Week. This event runs every other year and is organised by The Royal Entomological Society.

### **Bury a bucket for beetles**

Make some holes in a plastic bucket, fill it with a mix of woodchips and soil and leave it in a quiet location in your garden. It could attract stag beetles and more.

### **Plant a hedgerow**

Hedgerows are a valuable source of shelter and food for bugs. Try planting native plants like hawthorn, hazel or honeysuckle.

## **Avoid using pesticides**

These can kill natural bug predators like ladybirds and ground beetles as well as the bugs we often consider pests.

## **Go peat-free**

Choose peat-free products – the extraction of peat destroys rare bog habitats and robs wild bugs of their homes.

## **Get buzzing**

Bees are really important insects. Not only do they help pollinate crops and flowers but they also make honey! Unfortunately, they're having a bit of a hard time at the moment and could do with your help. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is a great place to start for ideas.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: **[bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)**



**do  
one  
thing**

For more ideas of what you can  
do for nature, why not check out  
other Do One Thing activities at:

**[bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)**

**With thanks to:**

**Buglife**  
[www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk)

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