



The “Good Bugs” and how to use them.

What? You mean there are *good* bugs?!

You bet there are! Not all insects are beneficial, but some insects are good because they help people control the pests in their gardens or homes. These good bugs are also known as beneficial insects, biocontrol agents, natural enemies, biological pest control, and beneficials. They are insects that naturally eat plant pests. Actually, they don't even have to be insects – they can be spiders, mites, or nematodes, as well.



Are beneficial insects a natural way to control pests?

Absolutely! There really isn't a more natural way to control pest insects than to have beneficial insects keep them under control. This 'bug-on-bug warfare' is the way things really exist in nature. If there aren't enough good bugs in your garden then you can bring more of them in. (Like calling in extra troops for a war.) You can buy good bugs from internet companies, garden or seed catalogs, and some garden centers.

Is putting more bugs in the garden a good idea?

Yes, definitely! As long as you are bringing in known good bugs, there is no way they will eat your plants. For example, a ladybug has to eat aphids in order to live; it cannot survive by eating plants. So even if you put ladybugs in your garden and there are no aphids there for them to eat, the ladybug will not eat your plants. She won't become a pest. Besides that, these beneficial insects are not a danger to you, your children, or your pets, unlike some chemical means of pest control.

What is the best way to begin using beneficial insects?

First, you have to identify what pest you have. Like going to the doctor - the doctor has to know what's wrong with you (a virus, bacteria, cancer, etc.) before he or she can treat your problem. It's the same thing with using beneficial insects. Before you bring in a good bug, you have to know what bad bug is causing the problem. You can identify the pest insect by looking it up in books, gardening magazines, the Internet, etc. If you can't figure out what kind of insect you have, take it to your Cooperative Extension Office or another local expert. Once you have identified the pest then you can use those same sources to find out which beneficial insects are best to control the pest.

How do I put the beneficial insects in the garden?

They will probably come with instructions on how to release them, but it will likely involve walking around the garden and shaking the good bugs out of their container. If you release them in the evening or early morning, just after you've watered the garden you will help to keep them in your garden. It's better to release the good bugs in small batches all around the garden than in one big group.

What do I have to do once the good bugs are in my garden?

Give them time to work their magic. Chemical pesticides control pests quickly but beneficial insects won't work that fast. Make your new garden friends as happy as you can by providing them with water and shelter. Remember that your good bugs are living creatures - you can't use harmful pesticides while they are in your garden. (Don't poison your own troops!)

Where can I get these good bugs and more information on beneficial insects? Read books and magazines. Ask questions at local garden centers and talk to your local cooperative extension agents. You might also want to do an Internet search using the words "beneficial insect".

What else should I know before using beneficial insects?

Like every other aspect of gardening, experience is the key to success with beneficial insects. Learn from your beneficial insect supplier. Check that your good bugs are doing what they're supposed to do. If you look at your plants at least once a week then you should have a good idea of what's going on with the pests and the beneficial insects.

Compliments of:

For reorders contact:
Franklin County
Cooperative Extension
191 Franklin Farm Lane
Chambersburg, PA 17201
(717) 263-9226
Fax (717) 263-9228
FranklinExt@psu.edu

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