



# Make a Good Bug Tub

One way to encourage visiting beneficials to be permanent pest patrollers is to grow flowers that are good producers of nectar and pollen; with your help they'll have food when pest populations decline. Even if your garden is as small as a few pots on a patio, a container of these insectary plants can help keep the good bugs around. In a larger garden, insectary plants can be planted among other plants.

Insect Plant Examples							
Key:	A Annual	B Biennial	P Perennial	☀ Sun	☀ Partial Sun	☀ Shade	💧 Water
Aster				P☀			Some native. Choose short species for pots. Bloom summer-fall
Baby blue eyes ( <i>Nemophila Menziesii</i> )				A☀☀💧			Native. Trailing, Blooms Feb-April
Buckwheat ( <i>Eriogonum</i> )				P☀			Native. Resist drought. Gravelly soil, require excellent drainage. Sulphur & red buckwheats easier. Some bloom to Dec.
Chrysanthemums, marguerites, feverfew, and daisies				Vary			Golden marguerite attracts all five major groups of beneficials.
Coreopsis				☀💧			Some native. Deadhead for long season.
Cosmos				A☀			Select dwarf strains for pots. Bloom summer-fall
Fleabane ( <i>Erigeron</i> )				P☀💧			Native. Blooms April-June/July.
Goldenrod				P☀☀			Some native. Look for smaller ones.
Herbs/vegetables: cilantro/coriander, parsley, caraway, thyme, borage, carrots, small mustards, chamomile, basil, tansy, rosemary, dill (tall), and more.				Vary			Cilantro and African blue basil highly recommended. Prostrate rosemary trails over edge pots. Let some herbs flower and some carrots and parsley winter over.
Mints: spearmint, peppermint, catnip (dropmore), lemon balm, Korean mint, and more.				P💧			Some native. Lemon balm blooms July-Oct. Good shelter.
Monkey flower ( <i>Mimulus</i> )				Vary			Native. Scarlet monkey flower smaller than sticky monkey flower, but needs more shade and water. Scarlet (B) June-July.
Queen Anne's lace ( <i>dracus corata</i> )				B☀			Tall. Blooms May-Sept/Oct.
Rudbeckia (coneflower, black-eyed susan)				B/P☀💧			Some native; vary in height.
Sunflower ( <i>Helianthus</i> ), Mexican sunflower ( <i>Tithonia</i> )				A☀			Choose dwarfs for pots. Avoid those with pollen drop bred out.
Sweet alyssum ( <i>Lobularia maritima</i> )				A☀			Highly Recommended. Blooms all seasons.
Verbena				P☀			Some native. Gives lots of sun and heat. No water on foliage.
Yarrow				P☀			Highly recommended. Some native. Insects like white. Blooms May-July.

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**What kind of pot should I use?** Ideally, you will want to have enough different plants for blooms throughout the year, but that could mean a big tub. Container size can also depend on weight limits on a balcony garden, the number and mature size of the plants you choose, and how often you want to water it. Perennials and shrubby plants need extra space. For shade-loving plants, a porous pot avoids moldy soil. Don't forget drainage holes. To keep the pot out of water, set it on pebbles or other supports.

**What kind of soil is best?** A light, fast-draining soil is best for pots. Supplement commercial potting soil with compost and a bit of slow-release fertilizer (organic or pelleted). Fertilizer enhances plant strength and size, but too much fertilizer—especially for native plants—will favor leaves at the expense of flowers.

**What's special about container care?** Group plants with like needs. Water pots more often and set them in slightly shadier spots than similar in-ground plantings. Mulch on top (leaves or compost) can keep pots from drying out too fast and provide shelter for insects. For early bloom, plant the pot with wildflower seeds in fall.

**What beneficial insects can I attract?** Ladybugs, properly “ladybird beetles,” are the best-known beneficials, but most people don't recognize their alligator-shaped larvae—even better predators than the adults—or their orange eggs on the bottom of leaves. Likewise, lacewing and hover fly larvae are the predaceous stage. And there are many more beneficials, including parasitic wasps—happily, much too small to sting—and soldier bugs, armored like six-legged tanks.

## California Native Tub Recipe

Joan Marlowe of the California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter, created a tub using California native plants. Natives need little water and little or no fertilizer. She used a 20” plastic pot mounted on rollers and plans to add Sulphur buckwheat (*Erigeron umbellatum* var. *polyanthum*) when available.

### Here is her list with bloom times:

- Blue bedder penstemon (*Penstemon heterophyllus* var. *purdyii*); perennial, blooms June–July
- Dwarf blue lupine (*Lupinus nanus*); annual, March–May; can add seeds in fall
- Seaside daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*); perennial; March/April–August
- Coyote mint (*Monardella villosa*); perennial, May–September
- California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*); perennial, March–October; long taproot requires tall pot /
- Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*); perennial, April–July
- Tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*); annual, March–September; add seeds in fall

### More Resources

Bauer, N. *The Habitat Garden Book: Wildlife Landscaping for the San Francisco Bay Region*, 2001. Flora for Fauna: Habitat Plants for Birds, Butterflies, and Beneficial Insects. Booklet from Wayward Gardens (\$5), (707) 829-2885. “Gardening for Wildlife with Native Plants,” Bay Nature Supplement, Jan.-Mar. 2003; and [www.baynature.com](http://www.baynature.com) (extensive articles and links) [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu). (University of California Integrated Pest Management site: pest identification, IPM approach) [www.cnps-scv.org](http://www.cnps-scv.org) (a local California Native Plant Society chapter site; see “Gardening with Native Plants”) [www.laspilitas.com/](http://www.laspilitas.com/) (database of California native plants with photos, range, cultural information; more)

Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program [www.mcstoppp.org](http://www.mcstoppp.org) P.O. Box 4186 San Rafael, CA 94913-4186 415-473-6528 or email: [mcstoppp@marincounty.org](mailto:mcstoppp@marincounty.org)

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