

Reduce Pesticide Use

To have a healthy backyard, a gardener must first make his or her peace with insects. Remember, insects make up a large portion of songbird, amphibian and small mammals diets.

Without the insects and other invertebrates, our gardens are not only silent and less vibrant they are crippled as far as providing environmental benefits.

Often our first reaction when we see an aphid or other ‘pest’ is to get out the pesticide. However, if we allow a certain amount of the pest population to build up, we are putting out a virtual welcome mat for their natural predators, such as ladybugs and lacewings. Once these ‘good’ insects are established, the need for pest control becomes non-existent. Most pesticides are indiscriminate—they may take care of your pest but they also kill all the good insects that help your garden function. For example, when general grub control in the form of pesticide is regularly used, anywhere from 60-90 percent of earthworms (and other decomposers) are exterminated. These often unseen ground dwellers are critical for good soil health. Instead of pesticides, try an Integrated Pest Management approach.



Columbine (Aquilegia canadensis); Christmas fern (Polystichum acrostichoides); Green & Gold (Chrysogonum virginianum).

For more specific information on practicing eco-friendly pest control in your garden, contact the [Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Office](#) for the services of a Master Gardener.

More Resources to Help You Create Your Own Backyard Habitat

Are you interested in recreating your yard into a backyard habitat? Check out the following resources for information on creating a sanctuary and attracting native wildlife like butterflies, birds and frogs:

- [Wild Acres Program](#)—Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- [Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program Certification](#)—National Wildlife Federation
- [Rockville's Community Wildlife Habitat](#)
- [EPA's Greenscapes](#)