

Wanted: Alive

BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Lady Beetle

aka: lady bug

Wanted for:

Eating aphids, mealy bugs, spider mites and more



Dragonfly

Wanted for:

Eating vast quantities of mosquitoes



Garden Spider

Wanted for:

Eating anything caught in its web



Wasp

Wanted for:

Lethal injection of caterpillars



Praying Mantis

Wanted for:

Eating many insect pests



Ground Beetle

Wanted for:

Eating insects that crawl at night



Syrphid Fly

aka: flower fly/hover fly

Wanted for:

Their juveniles that feed on aphids, young termites, ants and bees



Predatory Bugs

aka: assassin bug

Wanted for:

Lethal injection of caterpillars and other insects as seen below



Green Lacewing

aka: aphid lion

Wanted for:

Their juveniles eat insect eggs, small caterpillars, spider mites and more



If FOUND: Don't scream! Don't reach for the pesticides!
Just relax and enjoy your REWARD: a healthy garden

Lady Beetle: aka: lady bug, love to devour aphids, but will also eat mealybugs, spider mites, larvae of elm-leaf beetle and many other soft bodied insects and their eggs. Lady beetle larvae will also feed just as vigorously on the same diet as their parents.



Lady Beetle larva

Dragonfly: Their diet consists entirely of other insects. Their favorite meal includes mosquitoes and flies.

Spider: Spiders aren't picky eaters. They will eat any insect that gets caught in their web including those pesky grasshoppers.

Predatory Bugs: There are many kinds of wasps. Some are small, hard to see and parasitic; they inject their eggs into caterpillars and aphids. Others are big like red wasps and hornets which hunt for caterpillars. Mud daubers love spiders and feed them to their young. (The small parasitic wasps are the ones that caused the tomato hornworm to look like that.)



Hornworm with wasp pupae

Praying Mantis: These insects wait for their prey which is predominately other insects. The Praying Mantis isn't discriminatory - any insect or spider will do including other praying mantises.

Ground Beetles: They hide during the day and prey at night on all kinds of crawling insects. They come in all kinds of colors, shapes, and sizes. They like caterpillars, snails, slugs and other root-eating insects.

Syrphid Flies: aka: flower fly or hover fly, these can be brightly colored and may even look like small Yellow Jacket Wasps. Since they are flies, they won't sting. The larvae are voracious feeders of aphids, young termites, ants and bees.



Syrphid Fly larva

Predatory Bugs: are aggressive predators. They include assassin bugs, damsel bugs, big eyed bugs, and minute pirate bugs. They eat caterpillars, spider mites, aphids, thrips, and leafhoppers. Adults are winged; nymphs (juveniles) are not, but look very much like the adults otherwise. It is advisable not to touch these bugs as they can give a hurtful bite which can easily become infected.

Green Lacewing: Their larvae are also known as aphid lions. It's the Green Lacewing's juveniles, or larvae, that eat the lion's share of aphids, leafhoppers, spider mites, thrips, moth eggs, and other soft bodied insects. The adults require nectar and pollen to live.



Green Lacewing larva or Aphid Lion

These are just a very few of the beneficial creatures which can inhabit your garden. The vast majority of insects are harmless to your plants. Pesticide use is a last resort because it may kill beneficial insects. Reducing pesticide use increases the beneficial insects in your garden. To learn more about gardening with beneficial insects and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) see the following: <http://insects.tamu.edu/> or <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/downloads/beneficial.pdf>

To learn more about Texas Master Naturalist contact: Coastal Prairie Chapter, Fort Bend/Waller Counties Website: www.coastalprairie.org; Phone: 281.633.7042

Photos courtesy of Don Johnson, except for Lady Beetles, Syrphid Fly, Syrphid Fly larva and Green Lacewing larva. These are from the Entomology Department of Texas A & M University. Exceptions also include Green Lacewing by Ronald Smith, Auburn Univ., www.ipmimages.org and Ground Beetle by A. Steven Munson, USDA Forest Service.



The Texas Master Naturalist activities are coordinated by Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Texas Master Naturalist and Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners' Courts of Texas cooperating.