

# How to make a winter hide-away for insects



Ladybirds and many other insects, become dormant during the winter. If they are to survive until spring, it's important that they spend the winter in a sheltered spot. For many insects, this means finding some dead plant stems and leaves where they can snuggle down, or squeezing into a crack in a tree trunk, or nestling against the frame of a door or window.

## What you will need:



You can make a winter retreat for ladybirds and other insects by bundling up some dead plant stems, preferably hollow ones (bamboo canes work well), about 20cm long. Cut the top off a 2 litre pop bottle and pack the sticks tightly into the remaining tube. Then decorate a piece of card with colourful pictures of insects and slot it into the tube. Finally tie some string about the bottle to hang up.

You could also use an old wooden box (a bird box with the front removed is ideal) to pack the stems into, which could be fixed in a sheltered spot.

## Where should I place my insect home?

Some species tend to choose sites well above ground such as deep fissures in tree bark or under ivy leaves on tree trunks. Other species tend to choose sites at or near ground level.

Therefore you can fix your insect house either to a tree trunk, fence or some other site well above ground level, such as under the eaves of the house or garden shed.

Or you can place it at or near ground level. If you want it at ground level, it is a good idea to place it raised off the soil on a brick or tile or tied to the lower part of a wooden fence.

## How to look after your insect home

Once a year, say in early spring, remove the sticks and shake out any debris and dead insects.

## How to create other winter homes for garden wildlife

Just find a quiet corner or two – behind a shed is often a good place – and make one or more of the following mini-habitats:-

**A pile of logs** – ideal for minibeasts, wood mice, wrens and even foxes.



It is best placed in a shady spot, so that it remains cool and damp. Use a mixture of wood and different sized logs. Add a pile of leaf litter, this can attract even more creatures, such as hibernating toads or hedgehogs. Remember to add new logs as older ones decay.

**A pile of rocks and stones** – ideal for minibeasts, slow worms, frogs and toads. Also a good idea is to dig shallow holes, about 10cm deep, and cover almost completely with **paving slabs**. Excellent for frogs and toads.