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Creating habitats

Attracting wildlife can add an extra element to your yard or garden

Question: We just cleaned out a large, messy area in the corner of our yard for a vegetable garden. I was distressed to realize that we destroyed the habitats of bees, toads, lizards and others. Are gardens and natural habitats mutually exclusive?

Answer: You have noticed, on a much smaller scale, what is happening all over the country and the world. With the population exploding, more habitats are destroyed on a daily basis.

Basically, you might start by attracting toads, pollinator insects such as butterflies and bees, and beneficial insects.

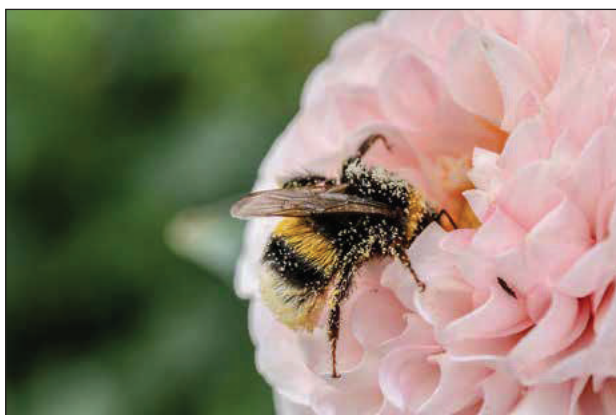
To attract toads to your garden you will need a water source, a small, cool shelter and some bushy plants for cover. The water source can be a shallow dish partially buried in dirt. Make sure the toad can get in and out easily. A rock or two in the water gives him something



Margo Roten
Ask a Master Gardener

to climb out on. For a toad's "house" an old terra cotta flower pot, laid on its side and half-buried in the soil makes an excellent shelter. Terra cotta pots are best because they are cool in the summer, but you may use any number of things – just make sure there are no sharp edges. Place this under a very bushy shrub to give him additional cover.

Pollination is vital for your garden. This is done by bees, butterflies and other insects. Mason bees are not aggressive and do not live in swarms, so they would not be as worrisome as a hive of honeybees. Along with a water source, mason bees require a small house for reproducing which can be constructed by



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drilling holes in a block of wood or arranging hollow drinking straws in a bundle. After the bees have

left, the house should be cleaned and ready for the next inhabitants. The water source could be in

mud or a very shallow dish, so they will not drown. Provide for your pollinators by planting beautiful flowers in your garden. Consider hollyhock, black-eyed Susan, aster, coreopsis, roses, or verbena.

There are two categories of insects and bugs you will have in your garden and yard. Some insects and bugs are truly pests and attack and eat your plants and flowers. The second category includes beneficial insects and bugs. They attack and eat the pests that are feeding on your garden. A good example of this is the beneficial nematode. It is a microscopic, soil-dwelling parasite that penetrates and destroys over 200 different types of insects.

When deciding what to grow in your garden it is helpful to know what type of insects may attack those plants and what insects will combat them.

You can increase the amounts of beneficial insects and bugs by

planting plants they like fennel, cilantro, cosmos, coriander, dill and calendula, to name just a few.

When you have nature helping you, insecticides are rarely needed. Avoid using insecticides that indiscriminately kill bugs – the good and bad. Read the label to make sure you are targeting the right pest. When the beneficial insects are killed, often times the bad ones come back even stronger. Because of the overuse of pesticides some insects are becoming immune to them, rendering the insecticides ineffective.

Check with OSU Extension Master Gardeners for help with controlling insect pests in ways that are least harmful to the environment.

Do you have a gardening question? Email, call or visit the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-672-4461, or 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.