

Build a bug hotel



What you will need:

You can choose any of the following:

- old wooden pallets
- strips of wood
- straw
- moss
- dry leaves
- woodchips
- old terracotta pots
- old roofing tiles
- bricks, preferably those with holes through them
- old logs
- bark
- pine cones
- sand
- soil
- hollow bamboo canes
- dead hollow stems cut from shrubs and herbaceous plants
- a sheet of roofing felt
- planks of wood
- whatever else – preferably natural materials – you can find!!

Step by step guide

1 Choose a suitable site. It needs to be level and the ground firm.

You'll get different residents depending on where you place your hotel, as some like cool damp conditions and others (such as solitary bees) prefer the sun.

Keep it a good distance away from your vegetable beds, so you don't give them a great excuse for setting up base next door to it!

2 The basic structure You will need a strong, stable framework – it's up to you how big you go!

Old wooden pallets are perfect for a large hotel as they're sturdy and come with ready-made gaps. Start by laying some bricks on the ground. Leave some spaces in between the bricks – try creating an H-shape. Add three or four layers of your wooden pallet or strips of wood on top of your bricks. If you leave larger ends, you're more likely to attract hedgehogs.

You can also make a smaller structure, depending on the wood and space you have – just make sure you place it close to the ground.

3 Fill the gaps. The idea is to provide all sorts of different nooks and crannies, crevices, tunnels and cosy beds.

Include:

- dead wood and loose bark for insects like beetles, centipedes, spiders and woodlice
- holes and small tubes for solitary bees made out of bamboo and straws
- larger holes with stones and tiles, which provide the cool damp conditions frogs and toads like – if you put it in the centre you'll give them a frost-free place to spend the winter (they'll help eat slugs)
- dry leaves, sticks or straw for ladybirds (they eat aphids) and other beetles and bugs
- corrugated cardboard for lacewings (their larvae eat aphids too)
- dry leaves which mimic a natural forest floor
- a wooden box into the base of the hotel for hedgehogs

4 Add the roof. Make sure that the stack remains very stable. When you think you've gone high enough, put a roof on to keep it relatively dry. You could use old roof tiles or some old planks covered with roofing felt.

You could even give it a green roof by putting a bit of rubble or gritty soil on top. Only plants that love dry conditions cope up there, but some wild flower seeds could arrive on the breeze and take root.

Surround your hotel with nectar-rich flowers – essential food for butterflies, bees and other flying insects.

If you want, choose a name for your hotel and put a sign up outside. Children will get a thrill from making their first home.