

want to purchase mantids, try about three egg cases for 2,000 to 3,000 square feet of garden. To increase the young mantids' survival rate, put the egg cases in a screen-covered box. Check them every day after the trees begin to leaf out. Provide them with water, and after two days separate the newborns before they start eyeing one another. Scatter them around the garden, orchard, and flower beds. They will still drive off many of their brothers and sisters, but coverage should still be fairly good, and you may even have a generation that will reproduce for next year.

Predatory Mites

Predatory mites will attack Mexican bean beetles, spider mites, and greenhouse mites. Package instructions will suggest appropriate quantities of mites to release. One release per season should be adequate. After control is gained, some predatory mites will remain to provide continued assistance throughout the growing season. Mites flourish in warm weather with temperatures averaging between 68°F and 86°F. If daytime temperatures are too low, their reproductive rate slows. If dry conditions occur, mist plants to provide necessary moisture for these mites.

Animal Predators

In addition to the little army of soldier beetles, assassin bugs, and other insects that will police your yard for pests, you can enlist the aid of some big guys—birds, bats, and lizards, for example. A number of animals eagerly gobble up grubs or binge on beetles. Of course, these animals can make pests of themselves. The skunk is a voracious eater of grubs and larvae, but it can also tear up your seedlings while looking for them. So you'll have to keep an eye on these animals and decide which ones you are happy to have in your yard keeping down the insect pests and which ones aren't worth the trouble.

Bats

Bats bring to our minds images of vampires, fangs, and bites in the neck. We fear them because they sometimes carry rabies. Their erratic flying patterns do seem a little crazed, but these maligned little mammals do not bother humans unless they

are cornered or provoked. They aren't interested in biting your neck, either. They'd much rather make a meal of insects, including many of the pests that cause problems in your yard and garden. A single bat will eat over 1,000 mosquitoes a night. So, welcome their frantic flight around your home in the early evening.

Birds

Songbirds are seldom credited for all their help in controlling landscape pests. Although many adult songbirds eat seeds, baby birds cannot digest seeds and must be fed fresh insects. Increase your yard's bird population and you'll reduce the pest population.

Many people feed birds during the winter months, and that is certainly an important step toward maintaining a good-sized bird population in your area. However, if you want to keep those birds around during the gardening season, don't stop feeding them when spring arrives. Put out less food, less often. This will encourage them to stay around without making them entirely dependent on the feeder.

The best backyard for birds will have plants that offer tasty berries and trees and shrubs where birds can take shelter and hide from the neighbor-

Common Birds and the Insects They Eat

Bluejays. Cutworms

Blackbirds. Cutworms

Chickadees. Aphids, Colorado potato beetles, flea beetles, and leafminers

Robins. Colorado potato beetles, cutworms, leafminers, loopers, and slugs

Sparrows. Cabbage loopers, cucumber beetles, cutworms, and leafhoppers

Starlings. Cabbage loopers and Japanese beetles

Warblers. Aphids, cucumber beetles, and flea beetles

Wrens. Cutworms and leafhoppers