

# Beneficials' Bios

Most of the creatures that help keep gardens healthy and productive can be divided into three categories:

**Pollinators** help plants get the pollen they need to produce fruits and vegetables.

**Predators** kill the bad bugs that cause damage to plants.

**Recyclers**, also called decomposers, are nature's clean-up crew. They help break down organic wastes (things like rotting leaves and dead bugs) and convert them to compounds that improve the soil.

**Bees**- As bees visit flowers, some of the pollen sticks to their fuzzy bodies and is carried from one plant to the next.

**Birds**- Insectivorous (bug-eating) birds help control the number harmful insects.

**Butterflies**- Butterflies pollinate plants as they seek nectar from flowers.

**Damsel Bugs**- These insects feed on caterpillar eggs and small, soft-bodied bugs.

**Dragonflies**- In addition to eating the flying insects that can harm garden plants, dragonflies eat the mosquitoes that can harm people.

**Earthworms**- Earthworms consume organic waste, turning it into valuable fertilizer called *castings*. As they tunnel underground, they loosen the soil, making it easier for water to soak in and for plant roots to grow strong and healthy. That's why earthworms are called "nature's plow."

**Hummingbirds**- When hummingbirds feed on nectar, their foreheads rub against the inside of the flower, picking up some of the pollen. As they move from flower to flower, pollen is transferred from each one to the next.

**Lacewing**- Lacewing larvae eat soft-bodied insects, insect eggs, and small caterpillars.

**Lady Bug**- Also known as lady beetles, these insects eat large quantities of soft-bodied insects and insect eggs.

**Lightning Bugs**- Young lightning bugs feed on insect larvae, slugs, and snails.

**Lizards**- These reptiles eat a variety of garden pests, including snails and grasshoppers.

**Praying Mantises**- These strange looking creatures eat flies, crickets, and moths.

**Spiders**- While a few kinds of spiders can be harmful to humans, most are harmless helpers that eat insects.

**Toads**- Toads eat insects and caterpillars.

**Wasps**- Wasps pick harmful caterpillars off plants and return to their nests to eat them.

**Wheel Bugs**- Wheel bugs eat caterpillars and soft-bodied insects.