



INVERTEBRATE MICROHABITATS 'BUG HOMES' ON MONTSERRAT

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Invertebrate microhabitats ‘bug homes’ on Montserrat

Bug homes can be a range of unique areas present within a garden or green site, that allow invertebrates to complete their life cycles. For example, bug homes can be a compost heap, pile of dead leaves or a rotten log. Invertebrates need soft surfaces, such as soil, sand, compost heaps etc.; also, hard surfaces, such as wood, stones, underneath plant pots etc.; and finally, plants, such as trees, shrubs, vines, etc.

You can easily create space for invertebrates in a space, for example simply make a pile of logs and twigs, of logs and twigs this will be used by beetles and other insects that process and create new soil. Areas with large stones present are good for woodlice that feed on leaf litter, and spiders that predate on ants.



Above: Woodpile Photo: Lumos3; Below: A stone pile at the Montserrat National Museum; Photo: UKOTCF



Bottom: a log pile created at one of the Adopt a Home for Wildlife project on Montserrat. Dying trees were cut back creating more light and growing room for saplings. Wood was retained at the site for habitat. It will slowly rot away enriching the soil: Photo UKOTCF.



Wooden boxes filled with dried grass, twigs, bamboo canes/pithy plant stems/wood blocks with holes and other natural materials, will create shelter for insects such as ladybirds that feed on aphids, as well as leafcutter bees important pollinators. Many of these can be easily created using existing material on site as well as gardening waste.



Wood boxes (or ‘bee hotels’) constructed with bamboo and wood pieces. Photo: Vicky Wilkins

To make more of a feature, a wood box (see photo, the filled in holes are bee nests) for shelter material and wood pieces to be drilled with nesting holes could be sourced from and include bamboo.

Aim to keep a number of ‘bug homes’ ie log and twig pile and bug boxes present on each site. If twigs and logs were kept in an area that was very dry it could be a fire hazard and so recommended to keep in a damp area and this will particularly help beetles that use deadwood. Make sure any wood sourced from outside of the site is from a reputable source. To replenish materials in wood piles and in bug boxes, as over time material will rot or be lost and will need replacing.

For plants a range of different plant types and structure can be incredibly beneficial. To a range of different invertebrates that need the variety of plant types, and so a mix of trees, shrubs, taller as well as shorter plants create an important amount of variety.

You can record the bug homes at a simple level you can count and assess size. The Montserrat Bug count method, used in Homes for Wildlife Project, could be used to monitor the different taxon groups using the bug homes over time.



Above: Patches or areas of the garden left to 'run wild' as shown can be habitat for a variety of insects and plants. In the foreground, you can see a scattering of Tridax daisies, a native plant, which pollinators are attracted to. Photo: UKOTCF