

How to build a bug hotel

There are quite a few options for creating a bug friendly environment in your garden. For a start, find a quiet corner with lots of shelter and damp soil – bugs don't like it too dry, but they're also not good at swimming!

The stack approach

A lot of insects and bugs live close to the ground and need moisture to stay alive. Try finding a quiet corner of the garden and put down a piece of wood or a couple of rocks or bricks. Leave them overnight, and then have a look under them a day or two later – you'll be surprised how much you find.



A stack of organic material like these branches makes a great bug habitat, but not a very pretty one!

You can add more things to a small pile – rocks and bricks on the bottom, with twigs, planks, and branches on top – and there will definitely be some little friends moving in soon!

The plus-side of this approach is that it's very easy, but, on the downside, it's not exactly beautiful, so make sure your family is happy with the spot you have chosen.

The classic bug hotel

For this approach, you really need a wooden or metal box, or something similar that can be left outside. This will form the base for your bug hotel, and you can add twigs, pieces of bamboo or pipe, and other items to fill it up, creating lots of little tunnels for critters to inhabit.

The upside here is that they look super cute. On the downside, you need some basic materials to start with, so it takes a bit more preparation than the stack approach.



1. Have a look around your garden for suitable items to use as the basis for a bug hotel. Even a hollow log from your wood pile will work!
2. Bugs need to drink too! But not much water – most of them aren't very good swimmers.

A bundle of twigs

If you want the best of both options, here is something very simple you can easily do at home that looks great. Get as many twigs and branches as you can find from around the garden. Cut them into lengths – about 10 – 15 cm long should do. Make them up into hand-sized bundles and tie with ribbon or string, leaving enough length to tie the bundle to a branch. Spread them around your property in trees, providing a wee home for insects over winter, and a place for them to lay their eggs and create pupae (cocoons).



Use whatever twigs or leaves to make a simple bug abode like this one, made using tī kouka (cabbage tree) and harakeke (flax) leaves. Tī kouka and harakeke leaves are great materials for a bug abode, because of the way they curl up as they dry out, creating little spaces for insects.