

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

# Guardians of the Garden Galaxy



Integrated pest management creates a gorgeous garden oasis.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

*“Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.”*  
~ William Shakespeare

The gray turtle dove darted from the mulberry tree to the wooden nest box and back again. Thinking there must be eggs, I grabbed my camera and discovered a baby dove nestled in a hollowed nest with the mother bird proudly standing guard. The sounds of gentle cooing surrounded this bucolic scene. I felt blessed that these birds chose my garden to settle.

If you want a healthy, glorious summer garden, beneficial insects, arachnids, birds, amphibians and reptiles must call your landscape “home.”

Many people scream at the sight of a snake or a lizard and start swatting when they witness a spider. However, these are

beneficial biologicals devouring the insects and predators that capture prey that destroy your garden. Everyone loves lady beetles, known as ladybugs, and people understand the value of bees, but did you know that frogs, hoverflies, ground beetles, praying mantids and lacewings are invaluable friends to the garden?

The guardians of my garden galaxy are plentiful and ubiquitous. Every day as I walk through my oasis, I am greeted by numerous lizards darting from rock to plant, frogs hopping to hide under a leaf, spiders weaving webs, bumblebees, hoverflies and honeybees sucking the nectar from a variety of species, and birds making nests and dining on insects. My favorite garden guardians are the kingsnakes that eat gophers, moles, voles, and keep the rattlesnakes away.

Our garden colleagues keep nature in balance without the use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides. Using integrated pest management, natural sources of nutrients including compost and mulch will fertilize and keep your garden healthy.

Here are some of the benefits of inviting our flying, hopping, slithering, and scooting comrades into your garden.

### Birds:

As they fly from tree to tree, birds are pollinators adding more blooms and fruit which attract more birds. Birds eat a variety of pests including mosquitoes, aphids, grubs, slugs and spiders. Large birds such as owls and hawks eat rodents including voles, moles, squirrels, rats, and other unwelcome critters. They help control weeds by eating weed seeds. Watching birds and listening to their song reduces stress.

Invite birds to your landscape by offering:

- A water source including a gurgling fountain or birdbath.
- Birdhouses for shelter and nesting.
- Feeders for seed. Even putting a pie tin in the bushes with seeds or picked clover and dandelions will attract our feathered friends,
- Plant a selection of flowering plants, shrubs, and berries for them to enjoy.

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An elaborate bird nest with eggs.