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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## HOLD THE SPRAY – THEY MAY BE BENEFICIAL!

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Take a good look at that creepy-crawly before you grab the insecticide! Not all insects in the garden are bent on destruction of our precious plants. There are many beneficial insects that prey upon the more destructive pests, who would be wiped out along with the pests when you spray. Know your enemies, and your friends.

Friendly and familiar ladybugs, both adults and larvae, consume soft-bodied insects, especially aphids and mealy bugs. Lacewings also prey on soft-bodied insects, eggs, and mites. There are varieties of small wasps that feed on generations of several different insects. Even tinier are such predators as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a bacteria effective in controlling caterpillars, including codling moths and cabbage loopers. Some Bt strains also work on the beetle family, including Colorado potato beetles. Nematodes are microscopic simple roundworms that control several soil borne pests. And let us not forget the help of the pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. Spraying willy-nilly can wipe out the good along with the bad. An insect identification book is a boon to have on hand.

Beneficial insects can be bought, and then released into the garden, but it can be tricky to get some of them to stick around. Try to create a balanced environment for them—maybe dedicate a section of your yard or garden to plants that will attract them, and create a habitat for the whole family, larvae and adults. Plants in the Apiaceae family, such as fennel, angelica, coriander, dill, and parsley, provide the tiny flowers needed by parasitoid wasps. Clovers, yarrow, and rue also attract predatory insects. Low growing plants such as thyme, rosemary, and mint, provide shelter for ground dwelling beneficial insects, such as ground beetles. Composite flowers, such as daisy and chamomile (as well as mints), attract predatory wasps, hover flies, and robber flies.

Maintain a neat garden free of debris (where pests, such as slugs and earwigs, can hide), take proper care of the soil through crop rotation, adding nutrients and compost, water wisely, and [Type text]

you will create a healthy garden. Learn to identify the helpers in the garden, invite them in, and you will be successful with minimal use of the spray can.

View photos of some of the good guys at this web address:  
[http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/so-id/entomology/Benefical\\_Insects.htm](http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/so-id/entomology/Benefical_Insects.htm).

*Kit Cooley has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 2008.*

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