

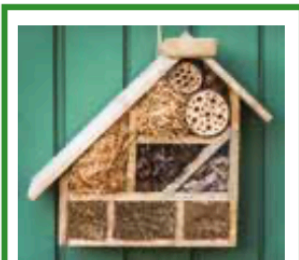


Flying Start for Insect Hotels

By Sanjeev Kumar

This month, two nature-loving students are taking their green initiative, Beds for Bugs, to schools across the country in order to help raise declining insect numbers.

Jake and Susie Berry spend their weekends building insect hotels on their balcony, but soon they won't be the only students creating beds for bugs. After vlogging their experiences of making the hotels and installing them in different locations, Jake and Susie received lots of support online. Last April they caught the attention of the charity Green Kids, who are going to help them share their work in schools and help students build their own insect hotels. They'll be leading workshops and judging competitions.



An insect hotel built by Jake and Susie Berry.

Jake, 10, says, 'if we don't help increase insect numbers then their numbers will keep declining. If we don't have enough insects, then we can't grow food – insects are important for us and our planet's ecosystem. We want to teach others why it's important to look after them.'

The mini hotels, which come in lots of different designs, provide a variety of insects with shelter. Each hotel has a wooden frame and sections to suit different insects' needs, using natural

materials such as dry leaves, bamboo canes, tree bark, straw and wood.



A bee explores an insect hotel in a park.

The idea, now two years old, started small. Susie, 12, says, 'I first built an insect hotel for a school project in Primary 4. It was fun to watch the insects come and go, so I built

another one with Jake for our balcony, and another for a local park. We have built a few every week ever since!'

Beds for Bugs has since become a family project. The children's mum, Angela, manages the website www.berrybedforbugs.org and their dad, Ashley, organises where they can install the insect hotels.

Global insect populations are declining, and many scientists are worried for their future. The Berry family hope that Beds for Bugs can educate people on how important they are to our ecosystem.

Susie says, 'If we can get students all over the country to take part, we can help so many insects.' She and Jake also want to encourage people to be less afraid of our flying friends.

'People kill insects because they're afraid of them, which seems silly as they're small and mostly harmless,' says Jake. 'If one comes inside your home, just help it to get back outside.'