LACEWINGS

Lacewings consume large numbers of small insects such as greenfly. As a result they are used commercially in some parts of the world in order to control pests on cotton crops. Even the larvae are effective pest controllers, consuming between 300 and 400 aphids before pupating into an adult.

SPIDERS

Spiders play a huge part in curbing populations of other pests, including the world's deadliest insect – the mosquito. Throughout history spider silk has proved incredibly useful: it's been used to stop wounds bleeding, as silk in fishing lines, and as the crosshair in guns and telescopes. Recent research has shown that spider venom may prevent atrial fibrillation (a heart condition), limit brain damage in stroke victims, and may even be useful as a pesticide.

WA SPS

Wasps feast on small insects such as greenfly. Without them we would be overrun with creepy crawlies. Like bees, wasps help to pollinate plants and flowers, providing a vital contribution to our planet's ecosystem. Yellowjacket wasps help rid our world of dead insects by scavenging them to feed their offspring.

DRAGONFLIES

Dragonflies feast on small, flying pests including mosquitoes and gnats. They're also very efficient at it, thanks to their ability to lock onto and track prey. The mere presence of dragonflies means good things: it indicates a healthy environment and clean water. In some national parks, dragonfly numbers are monitored to help document the health of the park's water ecosystems.

ANTS

As ants dig tunnels underground, they move and separate the soil, aerating it and helping oxygen and nutrients to enter the ground. Ants help to quickly decompose waste products that could otherwise rot, and potentially become infected with diseases. Ants perform a vital task for some species of plants by transporting their seeds to new locations.

GROUND BEETLES

Ground beetles are very effective at pest control; they will try to consume almost anything that moves within reach. Larger species of ground beetles particularly enjoy feasting on slugs and snails; destroyers of vegetables and plants. Ground beetles even help control weed growth by consuming seeds that would otherwise find their way into the soil.

BEES

Bees are vital pollinators; without them many species of plants, including around 30% of those we rely on for food, would die off. Bees also pollinate plants used as feed in the beef and dairy industries; without them, these industries would be threatened too. As well as producing honey (an important foodstuff and ingredient in products including wax, candles, and cosmetics), honey bees play a crucial role in helping us to monitor the effects of environmental pollution.

LADYBIRDS

Ladybirds are a gardener's best friend, with many species consuming up to 50 plant-destroying aphids a day, and as many as 5,000 during their lifetime. Some species of ladybird feast on mildew, a common scourge that affects many edible and decorative garden plants. In 1891 ladybirds were credited with saving the Californian citrus industry from a potentially devastating mealy bug plague.

WOODLICE

Woodlice rarely feed on live plants, in fact, they mainly feed on decaying plant material, playing a vital role in speeding up decomposition and recycling plant nutrients. Research identified woodlice to be beneficial in monitoring the ecosystem activity of grasslands. They're also a nutritious food source to many other animals, particularly the Dysdera crocata, a type of spider which feeds exclusively on woodlice.

MOTHS

Many species of moths are very effective pollinators; their hairy bodies enable them to pick up pollen from any flower they land on. Moths are a vital food source for many other species, particularly owls, bats, lizards, and even grizzly bears. In some African countries, more than 90 percent of people eat moth and butterfly caterpillars (they're packed with protein and healthy fats, as well as potassium, calcium, zinc, and iron).