

## Attracting Fireflies to Your Garden

By Nancy Ann

Fireflies, also known as Lightning Bugs, are starting to light up my garden and park on my farm! I was so excited to see these little creatures that used to fascinate me as a child. While I have seen them in the city, they are not a very common site. There are steps that you can take, however, to try to attract them to your area. First, let's understand more about the Firefly and its life cycle.

Fireflies are a type of beetle. Most are nocturnal, however there are diurnal species. (Diurnal species do not light up.) The males fly, and most females are content to rest in tall grasses and shrubs. They will mate during the warmest part of the Summer and the female will lay her eggs just beneath the ground. The eggs hatch into larvae within 3 to 4 weeks and feed on worms, snails, and slugs until the end of Summer. The larvae then burrow themselves into the ground or under the bark of trees and hibernate over Winter. In the Spring, they emerge and begin again to feed on worms, snails, and slugs and then pupate for 1 to 1 ½ weeks and come out as a firefly. At this point, they continue on the same diet, but also will begin to include pollen and nectar.

To attract these unique and interesting creatures to your area, keep in mind that marshes and wetlands provide an abundance of food sources for the Firefly. Plant colorful plants and flowers that provide pollen and nectar for them. Because snails and slugs are an important food source for them, do not try to control these. Eliminate the use of chemicals as Fireflies will avoid any harmful chemical or odor. Solar lights are very popular in the garden; however, lights of any kind will affect the Fireflies light signals. When they light up, they are trying to signal to another Firefly, therefore, providing a naturally dark area will help to keep them in your area.



Firefly Larvae and Adult