

Bug Patrol



Goals

Students will understand the other creatures that inhabit the garden and identify insect habitats in the garden.

Objectives

Students will identify, count and record insects and their habitats in the garden.

Materials

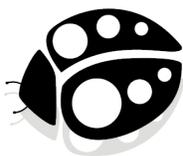
- Insect poster to demonstrate species diversity (available at children's learning stores or online)
- Viewing containers (available at children's learning stores and some garden centers)
- Plastic spoons for collecting bugs
- Journals and pens

Time: 25-30 minutes

Background Information

Students can learn a lot about insects by closely observing them. Take note of garden spaces where students are likely to find insects.

Among the flowers: many nectar-eating insects such as caterpillars, moths, butterflies and bees.



In the vegetable garden: many different larvae, insects and other creatures can be found feasting among the plants. Some are quite welcome because they are eating the harmful insects, such as the ladybug, which keeps down the aphid population. Others you might see are beetles, snails, slugs, ants, grasshoppers, earwigs and spiders.

Under the soil: a "helper" that lives underground is the earthworm. These wriggling creatures tunnel through the soil making it easier for water and air to seep in and reach the thirsty roots.

Introduction (5 min)

In their journals, have students write a list or paragraph explaining what types of bugs they think they might find in the garden and specific locations where they think they might find them.

Activity Steps (20 – 25 min)

1. Discuss the importance of handling creatures carefully and gently as they lack bones and can be hurt easily.
2. Show the students good spots to find insects such as under rocks and rotten logs, on the underside of leaves, inside flowers, in the grass, underneath piles of hay, etc.

3. If the group is more than ten participants, divide them up into partners so they can share the materials. Instruct them to use their plastic spoons to transfer the bugs from their garden homes to the viewing container.
4. Go bug hunting! When students capture an insect, be sure to have them include some source of food, such as the leaf of the plant where it was found (you can also provide cotton balls soaked in water to reinforce basic life needs of all creatures). Ask the students to keep their bugs out of direct sunlight as insects like cool, dark habitats.
5. Look through the magnifier to get a better view. Ask the students if they can find the various body parts of an insect. Have them share their creatures with each other. Use the poster to identify the types of bugs found.
6. Have students record their findings in their journals. It may be best to create a chart to record results. Students should record the types of insects, numbers (i.e. 1, 2, many, few) and habitat where they found them. A quick sketch could also be included.
7. Release the creature exactly where you found it so the insect will find its way back home.
8. Pull out the worm bin (if available) and let the kids to observe the worms in action.



Conclusion (5 – 8 min)

Have students write a paragraph about their findings and compare their discoveries to their original hypothesis about insects in the garden and their habitats.

Notes
