

Bugs Count

Discover the invertebrates – animals without backbones – that live on and around our buildings and in our gardens, parks and school grounds.
Follow these search tips to find them. Think like a bug – where would you hide?



Ladybird challenge
Can you find the 10 ladybirds hidden in the picture?
You have to look really carefully – try using your OPAL magnifier.

Compost and dead leaves
Home to many bugs, which do an important job in breaking down garden waste, helping to recycle nutrients and fertilise the soil.
Put a few handfuls in a tray and see what moves.
You might see **woodlice, beetles, worms, slugs, millipedes** or **centipedes**.

Log piles
Bugs love old rotting wood! It provides a damp and dark living space and is eaten by many kinds of insect larvae (young).
Look for **woodlice, slugs, snails, beetles, millipedes** and **insect larvae**.

Soil
A teaspoon of healthy soil contains more inhabitants than there are humans on Earth! Most are microscopic, but to find the larger ones try disturbing the top layer of soil.
Keep an eye out for **earthworms, woodlice, beetles** and **centipedes**.

Flowers
Open flowers provide nectar (a sugary liquid) for insects to eat, as a reward for them transferring pollen between plants. The greater the variety of flowers, the greater the variety of bugs you will find.
Bees, butterflies, hoverflies and **beetles** are all found visiting flowers, especially on sunny days.

Shrubs and climbing plants
They provide dense shelter and a great hiding place for bugs. Look underneath the leaves and on stems. You might see **spiders, caterpillars, true bugs** and **beetles**.
Ivy flowers late in the year, making it a vital source of nectar in early autumn. Look out for **hoverflies, bees, wasps** and other insects at this time.

Human-made hard surfaces
Gaps, holes and cracks in hard surfaces are great places for bugs to live. Search on fences, walls, play equipment and under windowsills.
Keep an eye out for **spiders** and their **webs**, which are often built on hard surfaces.

Long grass
Leaving a patch of grass to grow longer is a great way to attract bugs – you'll find more than in a regularly mown lawn.
Long grass is home to **grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars, true bugs** and **moths**.

Take care Don't try to turn over any heavy stones or logs, only those that you can easily lift.
Handle bugs gently – they are delicate, so only pick them up when necessary. Always put them back the way you found them. See the Bugs Count Field Notebook for further advice.
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