



FALL | Critters Slugs & Bugs: Friend or Foe?

Summary:

There are many different critters that roam our gardens. Some, like the worm, help make our gardens healthy and vibrant. Others, like the slug, eat away at our gardens, leaving plants damaged and produce destroyed. Together, we'll brainstorm some ways to keep the good bugs in and the bad bugs out of the garden.

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: Garden gloves, bucket, magnifying glass, and eggshells. Before coming to the garden, bake the eggshells for 10 minutes at 150 degrees on a cookie sheet to dry them out.

Explore: "Capaneus, 2012" by Damien Hirst

Read: *Slugs* by David Greenberg

In the Garden:

Earthworms and ants are two kinds of critters that are excellent garden helpers. They keep our soil soft and healthy so plants can get air and nutrients to their roots. We love these bugs. Unfortunately there are also some bugs in our gardens that are not so helpful. Slugs, snails, earwigs, aphids, grubs and Japanese beetles are five of the most common garden pests. Though small, they can do big damage by chewing through leaves, roots, and produce. These bugs love damp, leafy environments—just like our garden. Our job today is to keep our plants safe from these little monsters and find ways that we can protect them.

Let's start by making some bug observations. If you brought a notebook, you can make a quick chart of bugs: friend or foe?

- Can you find any slugs in the garden? Here are some clues: they leave a slimy trail behind them wherever they go, and they like to chew on plant's leaves, as well as fruits and vegetables.
- Can you find butterflies, bees, or other flying bugs in the garden? These kinds of bugs help pollinate our garden, meaning they keep it healthy and happy!
- Using your shovel, dig around in the dirt a little and see if you can find any worms. Worms help the dirt our plants live in stay soft and healthy.

Questions to Explore:

- How do you think a bug could help the garden?
- How do you think a bug could hurt the garden?
- Did you see any bugs helping or hurting your plants?

Activity:

Now that we have some ideas about who helps and hurts in the garden, let's implement a slug strategy:

1. Put on your gardening gloves.
2. Crush up the egg shells into rough pieces (not dust) inside the bucket.
3. Create a "fence" around vulnerable plants by sprinkling the egg shells pieces in one inch thick bands around the plant roots.
4. Check in often to see how your plants are doing and brainstorm other ways to keep our plants healthy!

Beyond the Garden | All About Insects:

Arm yourself with more insect knowledge by visiting your local natural history museum. Their entomology department can tell you all about the bugs ancient and new that roam the neighborhood with us.

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Common pests + resources for kids: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/1123>