

Finding Insects and Other Invertebrates

1. Tapping Tray

Find insects that live on the underside of leaves by putting a tray under a plant. Then gently tap the leaves or twigs of the plant so that any insects resting there fall into the tray.

You can also use a white cloth instead of a tray. Get several people to hold the cloth under the leaves of a tree or bush. Then gently tap the twigs or branches. Watch for insects falling onto the cloth.

Below, you can see how to hold a cloth under branches so you can tap them for insects.



2. Plywood Cover for Finding Invertebrates

Slugs, worms, and some insects like damp, dark places. Moisten a place on the ground and place a piece of plywood over it. Check at least once a day, at different times of day, to see what has crawled under the cover.

3. Sugar Trap for Moths

Moths mostly come out after dark, so you'll have to wait for dark to use this trap.

Recipe:

8 oz. of molasses

2 lbs. of dark brown sugar

16 oz. cola drink

1 drop of rum (some moths like rum)

Heat the cola over medium heat till it simmers, then simmer 5 minutes. Stir in the brown sugar, and dissolve completely. Stir in the molasses, dissolve completely. Simmer for two more minutes. Let cool, and keep in a closed jar until sunset. Add a drop of rum just before using. Paint the mixture on a tree or post just after sunset. Shine a flashlight every so often to see what moths have gathered on the mix.

4. Flower Watch

To find pollinators, find a comfortable place where you can sit and watch flowers in bloom. Keep an eye out for bees and other insects that come to pollinate the flowers.

Some pollinators are quite small. For example,

sweat bees can be less than one eighth of an inch long. You may want to get a closer look at the flowers to try to see tiny pollinators.

Some people worry about getting too close to flowers, in case they might get stung by bees. If you have a pair of close-focus binoculars, you can use them to get a closer look—without getting close to the flowers. If you don't have binoculars, just move slowly. The bees will be so busy collecting pollen that they will ignore you. (If you're allergic to bees, of course you should stay away from bees.)

You'll find the greatest diversity of pollinators on native plants.



This tiny sweat bee is about 1/8 inch long. It's green and copper colored, and quite beautiful.

5. Insect Pitfall Trap

Make a pitfall trap for insects and other invertebrates. Bury a plastic cup in the ground, leave it overnight, check it the next morning. It's easier to check the trap if you nest a second cup inside the first (see the photo). Empty the trap daily so insects and other invertebrates don't die in it.



6. Insect Collecting Nets

An insect collecting net can be used to sweep through bushes or grass for insects.

