



Congratulations to last month's artist! – Nick Baty (age 10)

July 2021

Invaluable Insects

Insects are creepy, crawly, slimy, and sometimes smelly. Yet insects are our friends. Insects get a bad reputation from the few that destroy our plants or bite our skin, but so many other insects are invaluable.

Pollinators are a group of well-known beneficial insects. Butterflies, moths, bees, and even flies are all vital in pollinating the plants that produce the food we eat.

Other important insects eat **pests**. **Predator** insects such as ladybugs and praying mantises eat other insects that could be harmful to our gardens. One ladybug larva can eat up to 40 aphids per hour! Ground Beetles eat a wide range of insects and will even eat slugs. Spiders are not technically insects. But these arachnids are also great pest control. Spiders are attracted to moving prey and eat many live insects. (Sweetser).

Another incredibly helpful group of insects is **decomposers**. These insects live below the soil and feed on organic matter. Imagine if every leaf that ever fell to the ground was still there. Thankfully insect decomposers break down leaves and other materials. When breaking down the leaves, the decomposers release important nutrients for plants. (Kids Gardening).

A wide variety of insects is critical for a healthy **ecosystem**. Humans can promote a diverse insect population by providing them with safe places to live and reproduce. Different insects have different needs. Humans can grow a wide variety of plants to meet the needs of different insects. It is also important to leave some area of nature wild in order to provide a home for insects and other wildlife.

Think about it...



Definitions:

Pollinator: an animal that moves pollen from one plant to another

Pests: animals considered harmful to humans or crops

Predator: an animal that eats other animals

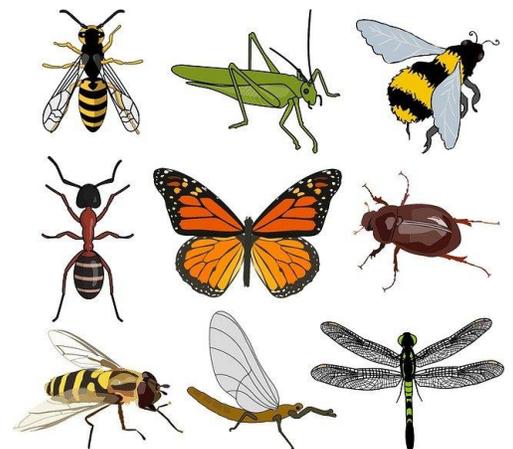
Decomposer: a living thing that feeds on plant or animal matter and breaks it into simpler parts

Ecosystem: all the living and nonliving things together in an area

► Insect Word Search

Ant
Bee
Beetle
Butterfly
Cicada
Fly
Ladybug
Moth

M H S V I D O L P K T D W T S
A L C C B U Y E A I A T O N Q
W D D M V U Q Q Z D O J U A T
W J A F J F F M K E Y R J T Q
Y T V C Y H O X Z K B B Q Y M
J Z P B I T W G A I G I U I X
F T L D H C U Y B Q B I E G J
H U B O G X K W X J B L W Y W
U B N V Q R M H S N T Q D B D
N E P G F Z D R X E H G F J W
V E D I Z Y U M E K M V H K F
X S X Q U L G B V Z H Q B U N
B U T T E R F L Y C U S I M N
C A E Z U J J X A H A X R Q C
Y L F A T X G I Q T N J R E Q



► Featured Plant: Cup Plant

Cup plant is a tall flower that is beneficial to insects and many other animals (Fiedler). Cup plant can be found growing in the wild and more people are adding it to their gardens. The plant can stand up to 6 feet tall. The yellow flowers attract butterflies and the seeds of the plant are a food source for birds.



Photo by [University of California](#)

The leaves clasp the stem and form a sort of cup. These cups collect rain water. Insects and other small animals looking for a drink will visit these small pools of water (Prairie Moon Nursery).



Photo by [Prairie Moon Nursery](#)

► Featured Animal: Lacewing

Lacewing is a common beneficial insect. The name, lacewing, comes from the delicate appearance of their wings. Adult lacewings are green with yellow eyes. They are not quite an inch long and are most active at night.

In their **larva** stage, lacewings look like alligators. Larva bodies are flat and brown with a pointed tail. Lacewing larva will consume hundreds of aphids and other

small insects that are often considered pests.

A wide variety of plants support the life cycle of the lacewing. Adult lacewings lay their eggs on leaves, where the larva will feed and grow. The larva then form a cocoon before emerging as an adult with wings (Winski).

Larva: A young wingless form of an insect

► Try at Home: Insect Hotel



Photo by [1der.and.cre8](#)

Build your own insect hotel using a recycled container or box. Fill the container with insect friendly nesting materials such as: pine cones, sticks, leaves, and rocks. Observe your hotel to see who visits.

Visit Hidden Lake Gardens to see this large insect hotel in person. →



Insect Scavenger Hunt

Ladybug



Praying Mantis



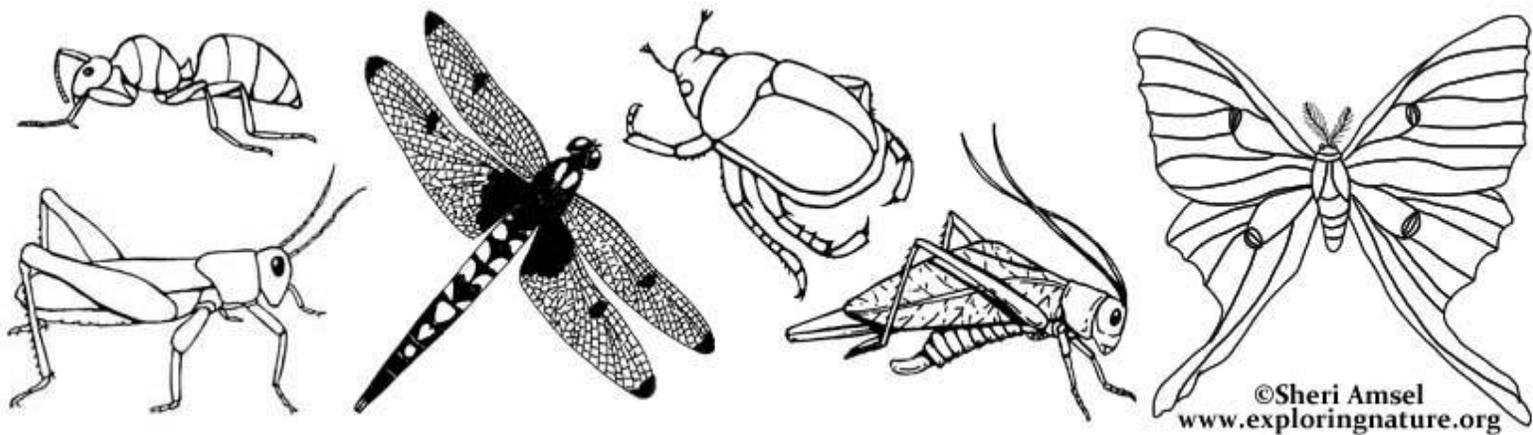
Butterfly



Ant



► Color it (submissions due July 20th)



► Contact Us

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Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

Submit your coloring page for a chance to be featured in our next newsletter!

Please email a clear photo or color scan of your finished coloring sheet (including child's name and age) to Samantha Howard at howar279@msu.edu by July 20th.

► References

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