

POLLINATOR WATER STATION

Creating an insect-safe drinking station helps kids examine bug biology and build empathy



Materials

- Container
- Rocks or other dimensional objects
- Water
- Cuttings or fallen flowers/leaves
- Background Information

All insects need water to survive, and while most herbivorous insects get enough hydration from the nectar or plant parts that they eat, during the heat of summer some may search for additional water sources.

Carnivorous insects often seek water sources outside their food sources – from dew drops, fruits, the edges of ponds, etc. Honeybees even collect water and bring it back to their hives to regulate temperature and thin their honey. But on a hot summer's day, lower-volume water sources tend to dry up, and large-volume water sources pose the threat of drowning. In this activity, kids create a water source

with enough water to outlast a sunny day and enough dry surface from which insects can safely drink. This easy activity requires simple materials and can be done in a garden or other outdoor setting.

Instructions

- Discuss some basic bug biology with kids, drawing connections between our needs and those of beneficial insects like pollinators (e.g., we all need food, water, and safety).
- Have kids collect fresh or fallen flowers and leaves. You can emphasize the importance of gathering in moderation, leaving some flowers and leaves for animals that eat them or use them for habitat.
- Provide kids with a container and rocks (or other dimensional objects like shells or bottle caps). Having kids do this in groups also promotes collaboration and teamwork.
- Instruct kids to cover almost the entire bottom of the container with rocks, leaving small amounts of space between them.
- Explain that the trick to a pollinator water station is to create dry “islands” surrounded by water. That way, wherever a bug lands it both has access to water and a safe, dry spot to pause and rest while drinking. Have kids add water halfway up the height of the rocks (islands) so that water covers the bottom of the container while the tops of the rocks remain dry.
- Lastly, decorate the water fountain by adding sprigs of flowers and leaves to grab the attention of beneficial bugs and add visual interest.
- Place the water station in the shade near flowering plants and check it daily, adding fresh water as necessary.