

Tiny Science

for big thinkers

Greetings Junior Entomologists!

Congratulations on your own praying mantis egg case! The scientific term for this weird object is “ootheca”, pronounced: ooh-ooH-THEEK-uh. That word is greek for “egg box”, haha. No kidding! There are about 50-200 mantis eggs in there! Please read these instructions to take care of these live animals!

SUPER IMPORTANT

Keep this cup away from direct sunlight and heat!

Your egg case would be baked in its cup after just a few minutes of direct sun! This means in a hot car too. Avoid creating a solar oven situation. Take this cup straight home and set it on a table or counter away from *direct* sun.

DIRECTIONS:

Please keep your egg case in the cup, indoors, while waiting for them to hatch. They won't be able to escape, and they can breathe!) This cup-hatching method will allow you to see the ADORABLE mantis pups once they've hatched (or if you are super lucky, while they are hatching), and if it is a dud, we will know for sure! It is helpful to gently provide humidity to mimic natural rains and dew. I do this by dropping a small square of damp paper towel in once a week, and periodically spraying or wetting the egg case. Be gentle! The eggs are in there!! Please let me know if your egg case has not hatched after 6 weeks indoors and we will arrange a replacement. The hatchlings will squeeze out of the egg case through small vents that are tough to see. The egg case will look unchanged after emergence.

Once emerged, these pups will need to be released into a much bigger environment within a few hours. Bring your hatched cup outside near a robust shrub or bush in your yard or garden, remove the lid, and set it within the bush or plant for the pups to climb and hop out onto. Be careful! These baby beasts are REALLY FRAGILE and can be crushed by the rolling egg case! Watch as they disperse to your shrub! Soooo cute. They are safe to hold, but very easily crushed at this soft stage.

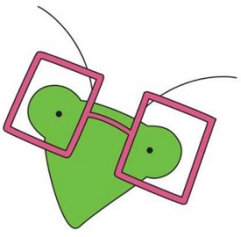
*Important tips: Release all in one location and avoid very sticky flowers.

Praying mantises are sit-and-wait predators, just like spiders. This means that they generally hang out in the same area their whole life. They eat insects and are safe to hold (so fragile!) Contact Jen with any questions or good pictures at jenpaur@gmail.com! Visit www.tinyscience.org and Tiny Science's FB page for videos and more coloring pages from Jen.

Search online for great videos with the key words “Praying mantis, ootheca, oviposition, hatching, molting”. For your information, these are chinese praying mantises, bought from Arbico organics (a great online gardening resource!) They are harvested in the wild. While they are an exotic species, they are not invasive. They participate in our ecology without disrupting balances (birds and spiders eat them).

Thanks so much for your interest in these fascinating insects! Nerd on!!

Jen Paur
Tiny Science



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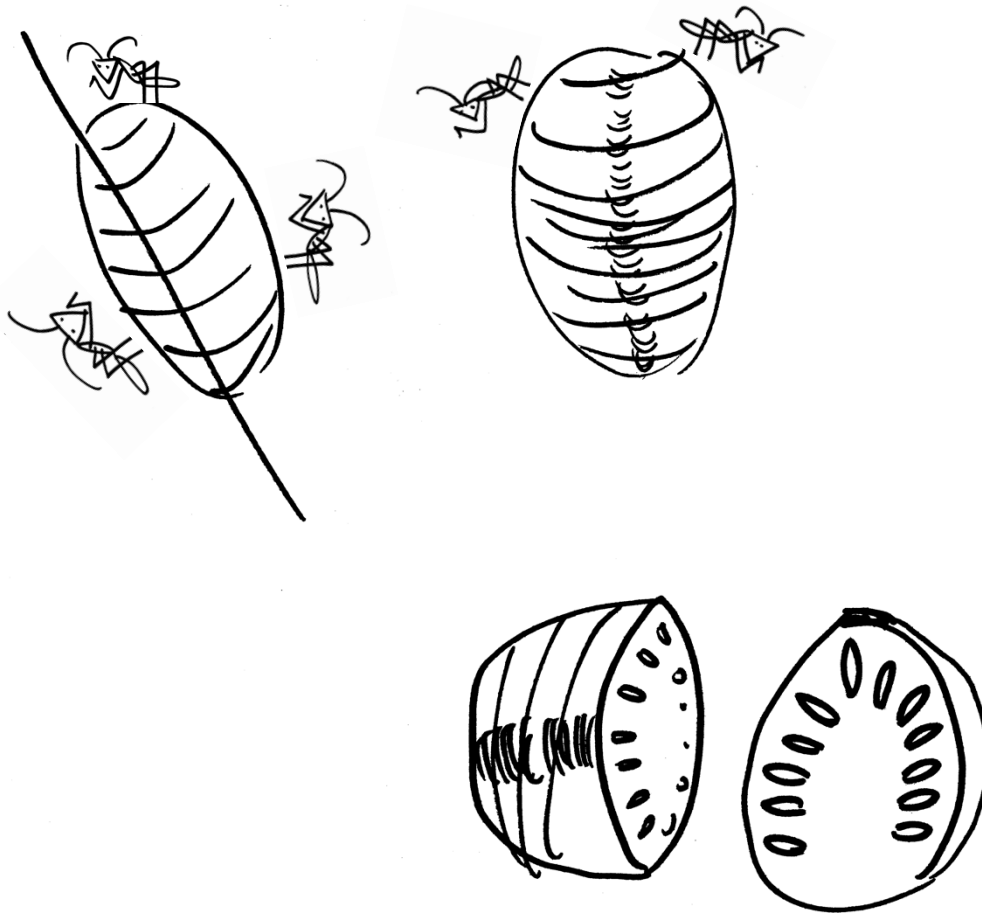
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The ootheca (you can say it: ooh-ooH-THEEK-uh") is many layers of eggs!

Each layer has an arc of eggs embedded in the hardened foam.

It takes the mama about 45 minutes to oviposit an ootheca ("lay an egg", so to speak. Hundreds of them.)

Can you draw more baby mantises? Are they nymphs or larvae?



After your ootheca is empty, you can pry it open to see where the eggs were inside. It is very interesting, so different from what we are familiar with.