

Invertebrate Home. The Bug Hotel



Invertebrates are creatures that do not have an internal skeleton as we do. This includes Insects but also slugs, snails, millipedes, centipedes, worms, Woodlice and many others. All these creatures carry out important roles in our gardens and other wild spaces clearing up the mess left by others and returning it as compost for our soil.

A great home for many of these creatures is either a compost heap or a log pile both of which benefit other larger creatures such as Hedgehogs, Birds, Frogs, Toads and Newts.

However this simple design allows us better access to these invertebrates for study and so is most appropriate for a school Nature Garden.

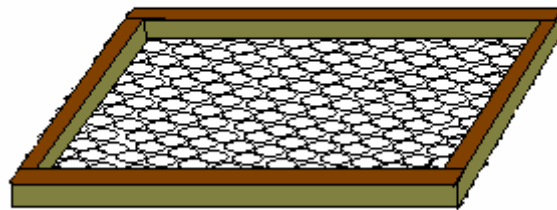
Firstly a simple Bug House can be made by building a Blue tit box without a front face and then filling the box with bark and/or pieces of wood. The box and material should be kept moist as these are the conditions which many invertebrates are happiest. The box should be positioned no more than two meters from the ground.

If you are interested in science and want to experiment why not build a Bug Hotel. A bug Hotel is larger with several compartments a bit like a chest of drawers, with out the drawers, or a set of pigeon holes.

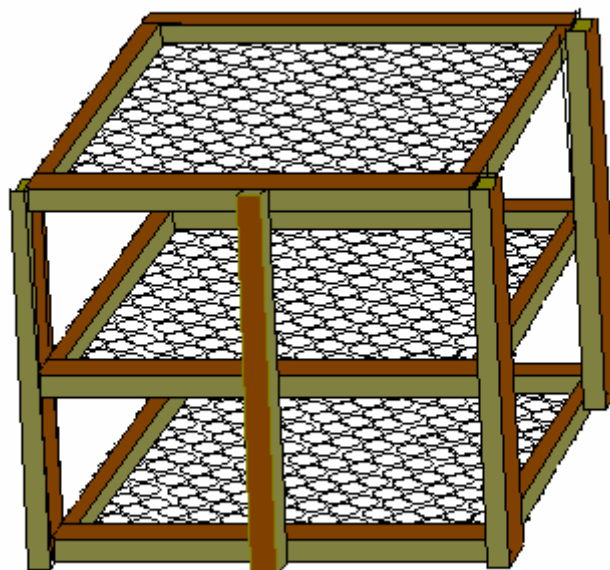
Each compartment is filled with a different material to see which invertebrates are attracted. So for example one may contain wood, another stone and brick another bark and potentially one with pieces of plastic. A class could then examine what attracts the most diversity of creatures or could look at the rate of decomposition of biodegradable items.

Chicken or similar wire mesh.
120cm x 5cm x 5cm Timber (number 4).
60cm x 5cm x 2.5cm Timber (number 6).
25cm x 5cm x 2.5cm Timber (number 6).
30cm x 5cm x 2.5cm Timber (number 6).
40 mm wood screws.
Small staples.

To begin create three trays lined with mesh. Each tray uses two 60cm lengths and two 25cm lengths and are connected using wood screws. Pre drilling the holes for the screws with a smaller diameter drill bit makes screwing easier.



Using the 30cm lengths make up the box structure and then attach mesh to the sides and rear leaving the front open.



Finally attach the box to the 120cm support legs if required before positioning the box in your nature garden.

Now the science bit. Each compartment should be filled with a different material to see what moves in and can make a home there. You might like to try old plastic, Pieces of brick, newspaper or old exercise books, strips of material and sticks or pieces of wood. Leave them alone for a month and then do a bug count and species identification for each material to see if they support different animals.