



Collect Insects From your Lawn

A school yard or your own lawn is home to many insects. These insects may be collected using a method known as sweeping. Sweeping involves swinging an insect net back and forth, much like you would sweep a floor with a broom.

You can purchase a net or make one yourself. To make the net, you may want the help of a parent or an older brother or sister. An inexpensive insect net can be constructed from a wire coat hanger. First, bend the hanger into a square. The bag for the net should be made from a fine mesh fabric. A five-gallon, nylon, paint strainer is the perfect size to sew onto the hanger. (Inexpensive paint strainers are available at most paint or hardware stores). The wire hanger can be connected to a broom handle or wooden dowel with duct tape. Wooden dowels 36-inch long are available at most home supply stores for less than \$1. For this exercise, you can have fun trying to use an insect field guide, such as the Peterson First Guide to Insects*, to identify the insects you find.

Sweep the net by swinging it back and forth so that a flat side is brushing the tops of the blades of grass. Begin by sweeping for about 30 seconds. Then swing the net swiftly through the air to force the insects to the bottom. Quickly grab the net about one-third of the way up from the bottom to prevent the insects from escaping. While a friend holds a clear, sealable plastic bag, turn the insect net inside out into the bag and shake the insects into the bag. Once the insects are inside, seal the bag.

Once you have sealed the bag, count the numbers and kinds of insects you have caught. Using your guidebook, try to identify as many insects as you can.

How many different colors of insect can you count? _____

How do you think an insect's color might help keep it from being eaten by other animals? _____

What other kinds of animals did you catch besides insects? _____

Empty the bag and make another sweeping collection for 30 seconds. Did you catch the same number of insects? _____

Make several 60 second collections. Did you catch twice as many insects in the 60 second collections as you did in the 30 second collections? _____

If you keep a nature journal, you can record these observations.

Do this experiment several times throughout the year and see how the insects change.

Please Note: When sweeping, be careful to avoid areas of the lawn with clover or other flowers to avoid catching bees and getting stung.





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Experiments provided by the Entomological Society of America.