



4-H ENTOMOLOGY PROJECT: INSECT COLLECTIONS

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Beginning

Starting an Insect Collection



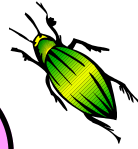
When you are working with insects, you have to make many decisions. One of the most important decisions is how to make an insect collection. There are different methods you can use. Here is a safe and chemical-free method for starting your own insect collection.



Life Skill
Ethical
Decision
Making

Materials Needed

- Net (Small aquarium fish nets work well.)
- Glass jar with holes in the lid
- Drying board—wood with ½-inch groove cut in it, or cardboard
- Push pins
- Paper strips made heavy paper (example: 3x5 index cards cut into strips)
- 3 or 4 freezer/collection tubs
- Toothpicks
- Insect book (Visit the library if you don't have one.)
- Masking tape or clear tape
- Screen card—3x5 index card with a piece of screen taped to it
- Shadow box—available at hobby/craft stores
- Backing material for box—foam or Nu-Foam®, **not** Styrofoam®



3

Prepare your insects. Put the insect into a freezer/collection tub and place in the freezer overnight. Leave one tub in the freezer all summer so you can store your insects until you are ready for the next step.



4

Dry your insects. Be patient—this takes time! After thawing your insects (about ½ hour at room temperature) put the beetles, bees, wasps and any small insects into the glass jar. Set the jar in the sun outside.

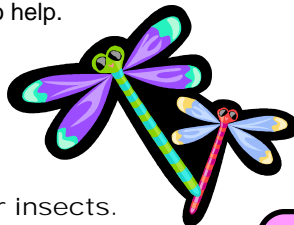
Large insects with wings, such as butterflies, moths and grasshoppers, need to be dried on the mounting board. This takes practice to get the insect placed in the right position with its wings open. Take your time! Use the toothpick to move the legs and other body parts; it's much easier than trying to use your fingers. Use the paper strips and push pins to hold the insect in the position you want for drying. The screen card is used to hold "critters" like centipedes flat while drying.



It will take about five days in direct sunlight to dry most insects. Whether your insects are in a glass jar, on a drying board or a screen card, don't leave them outside at night. Take them in each day and put them someplace safe. Continue to put them outside on each sunny day until they are dry.

1

Gather all the materials listed above. Most can be found around the house. Be sure to ask your parents/guardians to help. You will not need the shadow box and backing material until you are ready to finish your collection.

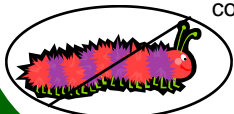


5

Put your insects in a display case. After your insects are dry, cut the backing material so it fits into the shadow box firmly, but not tightly. Remove the material and arrange your insects the way you want them on the backing material. Then, lower the shadow box over the insects carefully. Add one or two mothballs and lock the shadow box closed. You now have an insect collection that will last for many years!

2

Capture and identify your insects. Use caution, because some insects can bite or sting. Take your time. Use the whole summer to collect insects. Don't collect soft-bodied insects like caterpillars. Don't collect spiders.



Share your insect collection

Share what you learned with others. You can make an exhibit, give a demonstration or enter your collection in the county fair. You could also work with younger children and teach them how to make their own insect collection.