

living-things

Minibeasts in our garden

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking who lives under a leaf or log, holding up a magnifier and a snail, woodlouse or worm photo. Model the look-closely pattern on a leaf indoors, then take the class to a prepared garden spot to hunt with soft brushes and bug pots. Children look through a magnifier at a find in a shaded pot, return every living thing, wash hands, and draw one minibeast on the Investigation Journal page. Close with a short share of drawings and how gentle hands kept the animals safe.

Learning objectives

- Find and look closely at a minibeast in the school garden using a magnifier
- Draw one minibeast they found and handle living things gently

Before the bell – prep

Check the outdoor spot (log pile, leaf litter, under pots or hedges) and clear a short safe route the day before. Gather magnifiers, bug pots and soft brushes; print the Investigation Journal page and nature photo cards A–C (snail, woodlouse, worm) as wet-day or scarce-find backup. Optional child garden gloves for children who prefer not to touch soil.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
chunky plastic magnifiers	1	pupil	school kit	one shared magnifier per pair, or looking with eyes only
clear bug pots with air holes	1	group	school kit	clear recycled tub with a few small air holes punched by an adult
soft paintbrushes	1	group	classroom	a dry leaf used gently as a scoop by an adult
child garden gloves (optional support)	1	pupil	classroom	washable hands only, with handwashing straight after (default path)
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper for a drawing of one minibeast (same success criteria: shape plus one noticed feature)
crayons	1	pupil	classroom	colouring pencils
nature photo cards of Irish garden minibeasts	1	class	classroom	one clear IWB photo of each minibeast for whole-class looking

**Safety watch-point**

Stay with the class outdoors; no tasting or mouths; never leave pots in full sun; return every living thing; wash hands on return. Children never lift heavy logs alone.

Teaching moves

- **Look and wonder:** Hold a leaf and a magnifier. Say I wonder, I think, then lift slowly and name two things you notice. Bring in look closely and gentle hands only as you model them. Ask: How will our hands keep the minibeast safe?
- **Minibeast hunt:** Before leaving, show the route, stop line and regroup signal (two claps or raised hand). Issue magnifiers, bug pots and soft brushes. Outside, hunt in short bursts; adults stay close and guide finds into shaded pots with a soft brush. Children never lift heavy logs alone.
- **Look closely:** Cluster three or four children around an adult-held pot or a photo card. Pass the magnifier; model holding it near the eye, not pressing on the animal. Prompt two notices only: colour, shell, legs, soft body, still or moving. Return every living thing before you walk in.
- **Show and draw:** Hands washed first. Give crayons and the Investigation Journal page. Support with: Draw the big shape first, then add one detail (shell, legs or long soft body). An adult may scribe one word label if the child wants it.
- **What did we notice?:** Invite three or four children to hold up their drawing and say one noticing. Fold the class in: Did anyone else see a shell? Who found something under a leaf? Keep language gentle — no creepy talk — and close on the care they showed, not only what they found.

What it should show

Most children will notice a snail's spiral shell, a woodlouse's grey-brown body and many little legs (it may curl), or a worm's long soft pinkish-brown body with no legs. Looking without touching is full success for a nervous child. If outdoor finds are scarce, the same noticing lands on Cards A–C. Affirm whatever is found; redirect only if a child wants to keep or squeeze the animal.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Minibeasts are dirty or scary — I don't want to go near them.** — Frame them as small living neighbours we watch kindly. Model looking without touching and celebrate a photo-card look as full success so fear does not spread.
- **I found it, so I can keep it or take it home.** — Revoice gentle hands: soft brush, shaded pot, then put it back exactly where it was found. Say we are visitors in its home.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher pot or offer Card A, B or C so looking without a live find still counts; allow look-only with no touch. • Support the drawing with big shape first, then one detail; adult may scribe a one-word label.	• Prompt a second notice (colour and legs, or shell and slow move) and name the place it lived (under a leaf, under a log).	• Fast finishers add the home place on the same Investigation Journal page and tell a partner one gentle action they used.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language and Visual Arts — children name one feature and draw the big shape with one noticed detail.