DR. DIRT'S SOIL TESTS ANYONE CAN DO AT HOME · TEST 9 OF 11

The Bug Funnel

Meet the tiny critters that shred leaves into soil.



Time: 15 minutes to set up, then 2 to 4 hours

Kids and grown-ups together

You will need

- ☐ A funnel (or the top of a plastic bottle, cut off and flipped)
- ☐ A jar and a damp paper towel
- ☐ A piece of window screen
- ☐ A handful of leaf litter or crumbly compost
- ☐ A desk lamp and a magnifying glass

Try it

1. Put the damp paper towel in the bottom of the jar.
2. Set the funnel in the jar and lay the screen inside the funnel.
3. Put the leaf litter on the screen.
4. Shine the lamp about 6 inches (15 cm) above it. The critters crawl away from the light and warmth, down into the jar.
5. After 2 to 4 hours, look in the jar with the magnifying glass. Count and draw what you find.

What it means

Springtails
Tiny jumpers.

Mites
Tiny and round, with 8 legs.

Pill bugs, millipedes and beetles
The shredders.

Lots of kinds
A busy soil food web, turning leaves into food for the microbes.

Safety: The lamp gets hot: a grown-up sets it up, and never leave it on alone. Don't touch centipedes; they can pinch. Let the critters go where you found them.

***Wonder**: How many different kinds did you find?*

My result