

Bugs are fascinating – step into the miniature world right on your doorstep with the help of the detailed and tactile Bug stones. As well as developing children's knowledge and understanding of the natural world, the tiny creatures on the stones can also inspire a range of creative and sensory activities.

Get talking – useful words

Tiny, long, thin, delicate, hard, shell, wing, antennae, crawl, climb, flutter, hide, web, ant hill

Hunt the hidden creatures

What could be hiding inside a basket of leaves, sticks and pine cones? If the children peep under the natural materials, can they find the Bug stones? Alternatively, you could hide the stones in some long grass, or under soil or compost.

There's so much to talk about! As children uncover a Bug stone, you could ask:



- What can they see on the stone? What does it feel like? The stones are an appealing way for children to explore the bugs' characteristics through their sense of touch.
- What's the name of this bug? Have they seen a bug like this before?
- How many legs does it have? What are the legs like? A magnifying glass is useful to inspect its detailed features or a viewer to focus attention. Yellow Door's Natural Focus Frames are useful.
- Does it have wings? What are the wings like?
- Where do you think it might live?
- What might it eat?
- What might like to eat this bug?

Now the children have examined the stones, they can start to sort them:

- Does it have six legs, or more?
- Does it have wings?
- Does it have a hard shell?
- Does it eat other bugs, plants or dead things?

Bug safari

Time to search for some real bugs outside! A sun hat, clipboard and magnifying glass will help children feel like real bug experts. One way to find lots of bugs is to put a sheet under a small tree or bush, then gently shake it. You might be surprised at how many bugs fall onto the sheet!



- What bugs can the children find? Are there any that match the bugs on the stones? To help record their discoveries, children could place the stones showing bugs they've found in a tray.
- Some bugs can be carefully handled, but with others such as butterflies, you can explain how delicate they are and only for looking at.
- To remember which bugs they found, children can make rubbings of the stones with wax crayons, or press them into clay.
- Why not encourage more bugs into your outdoor area? You could create a simple bug hotel by filling large cardboard tubes with natural materials such as leaves, moss or pine cones, and placing them in a sheltered spot.
- Create your own butterfly garden by allowing an area of grass to grow long and planting some wildflowers.

Beautiful bug life

What creepy crawly creation could the children make today?
Use the stones for artistic inspiration:

- Spider's web threading: punch holes around the edge of a paper plate and provide wool tied to a small stick for children to thread through, creating their own web design. Great for hand-eye coordination, as they practise threading through small holes!
- Hand print spiders: be sure to hold your thumb out of the way as you do one handprint, then turn your hand around to do another one with the palm in the same place, so you create a spider with four legs each side. Add googly eyes to complete your spider.



- Butterfly symmetry: cut out the butterfly shapes in advance, then show children how to paint on one side and fold over so your butterfly has two identical wings.
- Lovely ladybirds: paint a paper plate red and cut in half to create ladybird wings. Stick these onto a large black circle of card, adding a smaller circle for the head. Add black spots to the wings with vegetable or thumb prints. Make sure you add the same number of spots on each wing!
- Outdoor art using natural materials is sensory and promotes critical thinking, as it's easy for children to assess and improve their design until they're happy with it. Try creating bug pictures using sticks, leaves or stones. Keep the Bug stones to hand as a reminder of what each bug looks like.

- How about being a bug yourself? In a large area or playground, create a bug obstacle course using whatever equipment you have – camouflage netting or green fabric is ideal for a carpet of leaves to crawl under, a log or bench could be a branch for climbing up, and blocks or mats could be stones to jump between. A slide could even be a waterspout for children to climb up!

Songs about bugs

Incy wincy spider

There's a tiny caterpillar on a leaf

Little Miss Muffet

There's a worm at the bottom of the garden

Books about bugs

Aaaarrgghh, Spider! by Lydia Monks

Superworm by Julia Donaldson

A Good Place by Lucy Cousins

Beetle Bop by Denise Fleming