

## How to catch minibeasts for a closer look

### Making a beating tray

This method is used for finding minibeasts on leaves and branches.

#### You will need

A white sheet  
Some long poles or canes

#### Instructions

Lay the sheet on the ground underneath a branch. If you can reach the branch shake it firmly but gently. If you cannot reach, use the poles or canes and tap the branches to knock off the animals. Be very careful when you do this not to break the tree.

As the animals drop off onto your sheet capture them with pooters and place them in pots for examination. It's easiest to give the branch several short shakes, and capture the animals a few at a time, rather than to have one long shake and for most of your catch to flee the sheet before you can round it up.

### Make a tumble trap

This method is used to catch minibeasts on the ground:

#### You will need

Two yoghurt pots, one inside the other  
Bait (small piece of meat or fruit)  
Some small stones  
A large flat stone or tile  
A trowel or bulb planter

#### Instructions

Dig a hole deep enough to take your yoghurt pots, one fitted inside the other. The rim of the yoghurt's pot must be flush with the ground. Place the bait in the pot and then balance the flat stone or tile on the small stones across the pot to protect your catch from birds and rain.

Set your pit fall traps where they are unlikely to be disturbed by people. They should be left for no more than 24 hours without being checked, but preferably just a few hours.

The double pots enable you to pick one up and empty the inside pot without the hole collapsing. When you stop using the trap either remove the pots and fill in the hole or, if you want to use the trap again soon stuff the pot with something like twigs or scrunched-up newspaper that can enable small visitors to make their escape. Lower the tile over the top.

## **Making a leaf litter funnel**

**This is used to find animals to the leaf litter.**

### **You will need**

a cardboard box  
large jar, plastic funnel  
an angle poise lamp  
Flat stone propped up to act as cover inside the jar.

### **Instructions**

Leaf litter is a good place to find minibeasts. Gather a few handfuls in a cardboard shoebox, bring it home and then place it in the funnel, arranged with the lamp and jar as in the diagram. Switch the lamp on. The heat of the lamp will drive the animals down through the litter, and they will drop out of the funnel into the jar, it has to be tall to prevent the insects escaping. Check the jar at approximately hourly intervals to ensure it is not getting too hot and cooking all the minibeasts! It is also an opportunity to remove predators likely to take advantage of other captives!

On a warm day, just taking your leaf litter funnel out into a sunny open area near where you collected it should work just as well as using a lamp.

**Whichever sampling technique you use, always handle the insects gently, and return them home once you have finished looking at them.**