

Discover life in the leaf litter



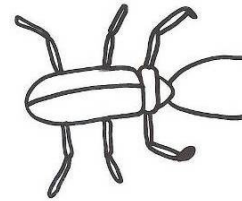
Leaf litter (the dead leaves and twigs that lie underneath trees and hedges) is home to a huge variety of invertebrates, including woodlice, centipedes and millipedes, flies, worms, caterpillars and beetles. These creatures can be hard to see, but one way you can discover what lives there is by making yourself a “Berlese funnel”.

Equipment

A desk lamp with a non-energy saving light bulb in it

A 2 litre plastic milk carton

Leaf litter – damp leaf litter will have more creatures



Making your Berlese funnel

Take the lid off your milk carton and make sure it is clean and dry. Carefully cut the carton in half sideways so that the top end is shaped a bit like a funnel, and the bottom half is like a tub. Turn the top half upside down and place it in the bottom half so you have a funnel (the neck of the milk carton) leading down into a container.

Now take a few handfuls of leaf litter and put it in the top half.

Place your funnel onto a table near a desk lamp and angle the lamp so the bulb is over the top of the leaves. Switch the lamp on. Take care not to touch the bulb as it will get hot.

The heat and light given out by the bulb will encourage the creatures living in the leaf litter to move down away from the heat and light and eventually they will drop down out of the bottom of the funnel into your container, where you can have a close look at them! Try using an identification guide to see what they are.

Make sure you put the creatures back outside when you have finished looking at them.

