

ANT FARM FUN

(Age 8 and up. Requires cutting plastic and collecting ants.)

Ants are one of the most interesting insects to observe because of their social structures and the way they make a care for their colony. One of the best ways to get to know these bustling bugs is to make an ant farm and observe it for a few days.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

One empty peanut butter jar, label removed and without lid
One empty 20-oz. (should fit inside peanut butter jar with at least 1" space between)
Soil
Plastic wrap
2 rubber bands
Old nylon pantyhose
Black construction paper
Scissors
Small piece of fruit or bread soaked in a mixture of honey and water

WHAT TO DO

1. Place the 20-oz. pop bottle next to the peanut butter jar. Cut the pop bottle to a height a little shorter than the peanut butter jar.
2. Place plastic wrap over the cut bottle top and secure with a rubber band.
3. Put covered plastic pop bottle in peanut butter jar and fill the space between the bottle and jar with soil and a very tiny amount of water.
4. Add a small piece of fruit, or a small piece of bread soaked in honey and water. This will be the food for the ants
5. Cover the peanut butter jar top with pantyhose.
6. Collect ants from the yard – get an adult to help, as some ants do sting or bite. Using a piece of paper, scoop up ants one or two at a time and quickly slide them into the soil area in the jar. Be sure to cover the jar as soon as you add an ant so that the others don't escape.
7. When all the ants are added, secure the top of the jar with a rubber band around the pantyhose. Cover the outside of the jar with black paper.
8. After two days, remove the paper to see if the ants have burrowed any tunnels.
9. Within a week, return the ants back to where they were first collected.

INVESTIGATE AND DISCOVER!

Ants are a very social type of insect, and each ant in a community or colony has an important job. The queen is important in keeping a colony alive – she gives birth to all the new ants in a colony. Other ants are called workers. They build tunnels, gather food and care for the ant eggs and larvae. There are also specialized soldier ants that defend the nest. Do you see the ants digging tunnels through the soil in your ant farm? Do you see any bringing food to other ants?

A worker ant can carry something that is up to 20 times its own weight. That's like an 8-year-old picking up a 1,000 pound camel and carrying it over his or her head while walking a great distance!