

MINIBEASTS

An Education Program suitable for PREP - 3

Program Snapshot

The Minibeast program provides a delightful introduction to the wondrous world of plants and their connections with small creatures found in a garden. The focus of this program is discovering how minibeasts rely on plants for food and homes and how plants in turn benefit from the small animals found in a garden. Children are immersed in the garden and their search for minibeasts through story, play, horticulture and sensory exploration as stimuli for learning.

A learning environment rich with endless possibilities, the plants and landscapes of the Royal Botanic Gardens inspire children to question, imagine, create, and to share their ideas.

This program and its accompanying Teachers' Kit provide excellent opportunities to address **Victorian Essential Learning Standards** across a range of Domains, including Humanities, Science and Communication, while helping your students make connections with the natural world. (Please see our website for the VELS Program Guides).

The broad themes in this program provide flexibility to focus on particular aspects that match the curriculum needs of the teacher. It also allows scope to provide choice for students' experiences, interests and intelligence types.

Focus Topics

- flowers and pollination
- plant defences
- nutrient cycles and minibeasts in the soil
- carnivorous plants
- plants as homes and food
- organic gardening, minibeast herbivores and carnivores.



Experiences

- Investigating a worm farm in the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden
- Exploring life in a watery habitat at the Children's Garden pond
- Taking a closer look the role of minibeasts in the soil
- Making minibeast repellent pot pourri at the Herb Garden
- Taking a discovery walk around the Gardens in search of minibeasts and where they like to live, while having the opportunity to collect botanic treasures along the way.



Some minibeasts that make plant connections...

Worms

Earthworms are an integral part of gardening experiences as they play a significant role breaking down organic matter into nutrients for plants and aerating the soil with their burrowing. Children will meet their own compost worm from the worm farm in the Children's Garden, discovering how they move and reproduce, and exploring the many advantages of keeping a worm-farm at school or home.

Bees and Butterflies

Bees can be observed visiting lavender in the Children's Garden to feed on nectar and collect pollen from the yellow stamens to take back to their hives to feed the bee larvae. Look closely and you can see the full pollen sacks on the hind legs. Butterflies also visit flowers to drink the nectar from the base of the flower through their 'drinking-straw' haustellum. Some native plants such as Everlasting Daisies attract bees and butterflies to the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. The Kitchen Garden attracts cabbage-white butterflies. Children look for tiny yellowish eggs on the underside of leaves.

Carnivorous plants

Children can meet carnivorous plants close-up at the Royal Botanic Gardens. Carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants, sundews and venus flytraps feed on the insects that are trapped by their specialised leaf structures. Try growing a carnivorous plant indoors to catch insects.

A word on garden 'pests'

Some organic gardeners suggest there is no such thing as a garden pest, but that it is an indication of an imbalance between the herbivores (plant-eaters such as aphids, mealy bugs, spider mites) and carnivores (meat-eaters such as ladybirds, praying mantis, lacewings, spiders) in the garden.

Children look for ladybirds and other carnivores in the Children's Kitchen Garden and examine evidence of where herbivores are chewing the vegies. Children explore those plants that use strong or unpleasant aromas to deter predators.

Session Times:

Morning sessions 10.15am –12.00noon

Afternoon sessions 12.30pm –2.15pm

Please speak with our Booking Officer if these times are not suitable

2007 Prices:

\$9.00 per student including GST

Minimum Charge is \$150.00 for small groups

Teachers free of charge

Contact

The Education Booking Officer
on 9252 2358

Email: edserv@rbg.vic.gov.au

Or visit our website at
www.rbg.vic.gov.au/education



