

Kids Ask Dr. Bug

Home to more than plants, kids ask Dr. Tamra Reall about the curious things found in the garden.

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Here are answers to some of the “scarier” critter questions.

Are scorpions dangerous? Amariton, 6

Scorpions are fascinating animals, but you will want to keep your distance because they can have a painful sting. While they are venomous, scorpions are rarely deadly. Scorpions are closely related to spiders – they have 8 legs and 2 main body parts (compared to an insects’ 3 main parts). They have pincers in the front and a tail with a stinger often held over the body. Scorpions hide during the day but hunt at night. Some people even keep them as pets. We have one wild type of scorpion found in Missouri called the striped scorpion.

How far can roaches crawl? Ramiyah, 8

Flat-bodied cockroaches are able to move quickly and stealthily through buildings. I don’t know how far an individual roach will travel in a day, but roaches are known for being able to get through small holes and cracks, feeding on bits of food whether in the trash or on your table which is why we have to worry about them as they can spread germs.

Where do bed bugs come from? Olivia, 8

The apple seed sized, wingless bugs that used to only appear in the nursery rhyme, “Goodnight. Sleep tight. Don’t let the bed bugs bite!” have made a comeback in the US. These bugs that can bite you while you sleep are ninja masters and, if you happen to be wherever they are, they may try to hitch a ride to your house to stay. Fortunately, they do not cause any diseases, but they bite and are expensive to get rid of so it is important to not bring them home. If you stay at a hotel or friends house, check the mattress and room for bugs or signs of bugs, and run your things through a dryer when you get home to kill any bugs that may have come along.

How many eyes do spiders have? Noah, 9

Many spiders have 8 eyes, but some have only 2, 4 or 6. One kind of spider living in a cave doesn’t have any eyes at all. Sometimes spider eyes are arranged in a single row, and sometimes they are in multiple rows. Spider eyes have different purposes, too. Some eyes just see light and dark, some see color, some can see far away while others can only see close-up. Because most spiders hunt in the dark, they have a special iridescent layer called tapeta, like cats. So, if you point a flashlight outside at eye-level, you may see many little glowing lights shining back at you – those are spiders! Even though they may seem scary, please remember that spiders are amazing and helpful and let them share your garden.



1Image: Wolf spider eyes by Opoterser

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