

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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What insects affect pets? James, 8

“Affect” means to have an effect on and this can be positive or negative. I’ve seen puppies playfully chase butterflies and lizards hungrily watch a cricket wander across a cage. Sometimes, it’s an insect that is the pet—I used to have a pet praying mantis. While most insects do not harm our pets, there are some instances where insects, or other arthropods, cause discomfort or diseases. Fleas, lice, mosquitoes, and ticks are some critters that can be risky to our furry, feathery, and scaly friends. Healthy animals are better able to deal with pests. Just as it’s important for you to eat nutritious food, exercise, and have doctor check-ups, your pets need these things to be protected against pests so they stay healthy, too.

I heard that some bugs dance. I can do the robot. Do they dance like that? Acelyn, 6

I would love to see your dance moves! Some arthropods, including insects and spiders, do indeed dance, but not necessarily for the same reasons you do. Honey bees dance to tell their sisters where to find the best food. Some male flies flick their wings and tap their feet to get the attention of female flies.

Peacock spiders have elaborate dances to attract a mate – lifting their abdomen and fanning their legs. Scan the QR code or go to this website (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq-r20mlGes>) to watch a video with more information.

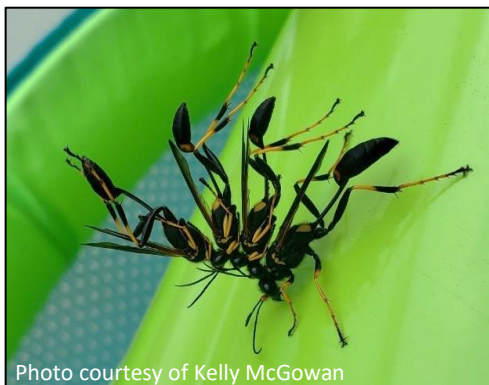


Photo courtesy of Kelly McGowan

These bugs are biting each other’s necks. What’s going on? (See picture) Tahi, 5

It’s the season for these wasps to find a mate. Sometimes males don’t realize that another male has already made contact with a female and he will latch on to where he knows the head should be. It just so happens that, in this case, two other males had the same idea as the first male and they each latched on to each other.

How do insects make their home? Zaari, 6

Insects are very creative when it comes to finding shelter. Some insects don’t need a place to return to each night and just live on the go. Others create a protected place to live, such as in a rolled leaf or between the top and bottom of a leaf. Some insects lay eggs in a protected place the babies will grow up – in a plant stem, in a leaf gall, or even inside other insects or spiders. Most insects live all by themselves. Some insects live in colonies. These are called social insects. For example, a bumble bee queen finds an unused mouse hole, creates wax containers for eggs, and as the new bees grow up, they start taking care of the newer bees and their home. Did you know that insects have to do household chores? Jobs include taking out the trash and keeping their room tidy. Sound familiar?

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