

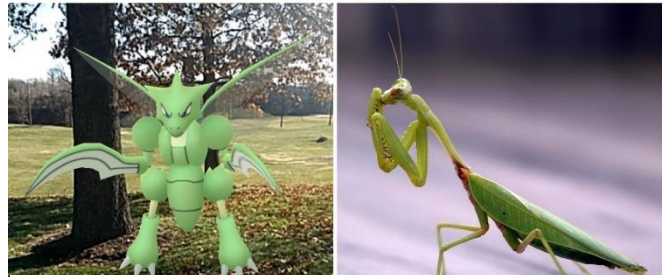
Kids Ask Dr. Bug

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

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We found praying mantises on our Christmas tree. How did they get there? Amelia, 10

It appears that your Christmas tree came with a bonus gift from nature. Praying mantis mamas lay around 100 eggs in a foamy mass on twigs in the fall. The foam hardens and sticks to the bush or tree until warmer weather arrives. If one of these egg masses, called an ootheca, is attached to your Christmas tree, you may end up with lots of tiny mantis nymphs in your house. It will be too cold to put them outside, so you may want to put them in a container to watch. They are predators and will be hungry. To keep them from eating each other, you can feed them small flies or tiny crickets found at some pet stores. Better yet, check your tree next year for oothecae before they can hatch and put them in your garden so they can help protect your plants.



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What bug is Scyther in real life? Gavian, 11

In the Pokémon world, Scyther appears to be like the real praying mantis, or possibly a mantisfly. The two-legged, winged Pokémon with two, large scythes as arms, is camouflaged by the green color. Its evolved form, Scizor, is also like a praying mantis or mantisfly, but looks like a winged red ant, too. Did you know that the creator of Pokémon was an amateur entomologist? Scientists have even written about how Pokémon can be used to teach about entomology. Currently, there are 90 bug-type Pokémon. Some of my favorite are Surskit, Masquerain, Vespiqueen, and Yanma.

What plants have flowers in the winter? Andrew, 5

Last year at this time, we talked about a shrub, called witch hazel that has yellow blooms. A smaller plant, called Lenten Rose, is another winter-blooming flower. This flower can be white, green, pink, yellow, speckled, or dark plum-colored. Even though this plant has flowers from December to March, it still needs insects, mostly bumblebees, to pollinate the flowers. The bumblebees only come out when the temperature is over 40°F.

What are mushrooms? Jaxton, 9

Mushrooms are a kind of fungus, not plant or animal, yet can be found in the grocery store next to fresh veggies. Mushrooms are a good source of Vitamins B, D, and selenium. When I was a kid, I was taught that fungi were a special kind of plant. However, according to scientists that study these things, fungi are more closely related to animals than plants. There are many kinds of mushrooms – white button, crimini, portabella, shiitake, oyster, and enoki are just a few. Please, please, please remember that not all mushrooms should be eaten. Local mushroom experts may be able to identify safe wild mushrooms. But for you, it's safest to only eat the tasty mushrooms purchased from the grocery store as many wild mushrooms are poisonous.

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