

How Insects Find Their Food: Sniff Out Your Breakfast

Please use this checklist to confirm that all of the parts of this station are in this bag both when it is unpacked before the OSF Science Night AND when it is re-packed after your event.

- Table sign, laminated
- Explanation/ What to Do sheet with Answer Key, laminated
- Box with 6 screw-cap spice jars labeled A-E and one with a flower sticker
- Ziploc of cotton balls
- Ziploc with 5 bottles of "scents" (A=peppermint, B=citrus, C=vanilla, D and the flower sticker=rose, E=cinnamon) to refresh the spice jars

What you will need to provide for this activity station:

- Tape to attach table sign

HOW INSECTS FIND THEIR FOOD SNIFF OUT YOUR BREAKFAST (Game 2)

Explanation/Background:

Odor is a major tool for finding food for all animals. Often animals have more effective scent receptors than humans do. Their noses are more sensitive and can pick up smaller traces of scents and/or distinguish smaller differences in odors. Animals also learn the scents of food they like and are able to digest.

Many insects find their food by smell. Pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, often seek out flowers with the same scent as those that they have been feeding on. This helps to increase pollination, by directing the pollinators to the same kind of flower.

What You Will Do:

Like a butterfly or bee, find a food plant with a particular smell and distinguish its smell from others.

What You Need:

- 6 spice bottles
- Scents: Citrus, Vanilla, Peppermint, Cinnamon, Rose
- Cotton balls

What to do:

Set up:

1. Refresh the cotton balls with the “scents” using the key below. **Remember, a little bit of these oils goes a long way.

Activity:

1. Explain that the participant is a butterfly or bee looking for a particular flower to get nectar. Before testing the odors, they must smell the scent of the “Flower” they seek (spice bottle marked with a flower).
2. Have participants smell the “Flower” and then smell the other 5 bottles.
3. Participant will then match the scent of the “Flower” with one of the lettered spice bottles.
4. A successful match means that the participant (butterfly or bee) has found the matching scent – and the desired food.

Answer Key

A = Peppermint

B= Citrus

C= Vanilla

D= Rose

E=Cinnamon

Flower = Rose