

Exploring Nature In and Around Your Home

Ideas and resources to help you look for, find, attract, and document nature in your house or yard!

Getting Started with iNaturalist

iNaturalist is a platform (both a [website](#) and app) designed for people to share their observations of the natural world, get help with identifications, and explore what others are finding – all while contributing to the largest scientific dataset of where species are found around the globe!

Participating is easy:

1. Download the iNaturalist app and make an account.
2. Take photos of wild plants and animals to make observations. If you know that what you're photographing is not wild, mark it as captive/cultivated.
3. Upload your observations to share with the iNaturalist community.

To help you get started with iNaturalist, here are some useful resources - we definitely recommend reading them and/or watching some of the videos to help you understand how to contribute your observations and how to become part of this global community.

- [iNaturalist Getting Started Guide](#)
- [iNaturalist Guide](#): making observations, helpful tips, what happens to your observation once it's uploaded
- [Video: How to make an iNaturalist Observation Using the App](#)
- [Video: How to Add Another Photo to an Observation in the App](#)
- [Video: How to Mark an Observation as Captive or Cultivated in the App](#)
- [Video: How to use iNaturalist's Photo Uploader on the Website](#)
- [Video: How to take Identifiable Photos](#)



Searching for and documenting nature in and around your house

There are many ways to look for nature in your home, backyard, or neighborhood. The key thing to keep in mind is trying to find the **wild** species in and around where you live. While we know there are probably many flowers and hedges that have been planted in your area, as well as lots of household pets in your neighborhood, we encourage and challenge you to go look for the plants that are growing on their own and the wild organisms that live in and around our houses and yards! What are the *wild* plants that are growing in your yard or neighborhood? Taking photos of weeds is fine! Can you find the insects and other creatures that use the cultivated plants in your area as habitat or food?

Arthropods in our Homes

Did you know there are, on average, 93 different species of arthropods (insects, spiders, and their relatives) living in our homes? Don't worry - most of them aren't pests and are totally harmless! How many can you find in your house? Document them using iNaturalist to have them count for the City Nature Challenge, and if you want, add them to the [Never Home Alone](#) project too!

- [The Public Science Lab: Learn more about your arthropods!](#)
- [Vox: The dozens of bug species that live in your home, in one chart](#)



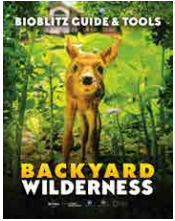
How to Find Insects

Insects are probably some of the easiest organisms to find in and around your house, since they're abundant and incredibly diverse! But where should you look to find them? What can you use to catch them? These sites provide some guidance on how to find and temporarily hold insects - so you can photograph them and post them on iNaturalist!

- [BugCollectors: Where to Find Insects](#)
- [WikiHow: How to Catch Small Bugs](#): we recommend trying the ones that don't kill the insects, so you can release them once you've taken some photos!



HHMI Tangled Bank Studios *Backyard Wilderness*: Education & Engagement Materials



These guides & toolkits were created in partnership with the California Academy of Sciences to promote outdoor exploration and learning in support of the film [Backyard Wilderness](#). There are family activity guides designed for exploring your backyard with the tools you have at home, Educator Guides for getting students excited about scientific observation and the natural world, and a Bioblitz Guide and Toolkit with detailed information about how to best use iNaturalist and resources like regional field guides and biodiversity bingo activities.

- [HHMI Backyard Wilderness Education and Engagement Materials](#)

Attracting Nature to Your Yard

You can add things like food and water sources or habitat to your yard to help attract more wild species!

Attract Birds to Your Yard

There are quite a few ways you can bring birds to your yard. While the most obvious way is to put up some bird feeders, there are other things you can do to attract birds to your front or backyard, or even to a deck or porch.

- [National Wildlife Federation: Four Can't-Miss Ways to Attract Birds to Your Yard or Deck](#)
- [Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Make Your Own Feeder](#)



Create a Backyard Herp Haven

There are many things you can add to your backyard that will attract herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians), and the bonus is that many of these will also attract insects, slugs and snails, and other organisms that like moist and/or dark habitat. We recommend trying the first one - a cover board, which is easy and can even be as simple as a thick piece of cardboard if you don't have plywood. Give it a few days to attract your new backyard friends!

- [Reptile Magazine: 4 Ways to Create a Backyard Herp Haven](#)

Moth Lighting

Setting up a light and a sheet to attract moths is a simple and easy way to bring more nature into your backyard! Photographing moths on the sheet is really easy, and you'll definitely attract other flying insects as well! Science Friday has a great set of instructions for observing moths, and the California Center for Natural History has instructions for building your own moth light to attract a wider variety of moths.

- [Science Friday: Go Mothing!](#)
- [California Center for Natural History: DIY Moth Light](#)

