## **About the Garden Lessons**

Over the course of the Garden Lessons, we will walk educators and young gardeners through the process of starting a garden from planning to harvest to putting the garden to bed for the winter. **Inside, you will find activity guides, curriculum connections, and tips and strategies for successful school gardening.** This hands-on series of Garden Lessons will support educators, youth leaders and students to start and tend to a garden project. These lessons were originally adapted from the Nova Scotia School Garden Resource Guide (2014).

This series is ideal for the integrated learning nature of Nova Scotia elementary curriculum; however, these activities can engage an all ages audience. Throughout the series that spans a full growing season, participants will keep a garden journal for planning, observation, and creative expression. Each student can have their own journal, or a group can keep one together.

Getting youth in the garden offers them opportunities to shape their food system, learn healthy food choices and connect with nature, all while building resiliency in a changing climate and having fun along the way.

### **Lesson Goals**

Grow Eat

Nourish Nova Scotia

- Engage in hands-on learning
- Gain food literacy skills
- Learn climate action connections
- Support emotional wellbeing and connection to the non-human world

# **Gardening and Climate Action**

Look for these climate action icons in Grow Eat Learn resources to make connections between gardening and the climate!



Habitat Creation & Biodiversity



Soil Stewardship



Waste Reduction & Circular Systems



Water Stewardship

Adapting to climate change is critical for our food system. By engaging in the garden, students can learn about food production and its interdependence with plants, animals and weather.



Food Security & Sovereignty

# Garden Lesson 4 Critters in the Garden

## Introduction

Complete this lesson between June and October.

Gardens can become a diverse ecosystem with an abundance of life. Knowing which critters are beneficial and which to discourage can be helpful. Some critters, such as pollinators, increase plant health and help with seed production; others can destroy plants or spread disease.

Lesson 4 will explore how to recognize some of the most common garden critters and determine whether they are helpful or harmful to your garden, as well as some ways to attract more pollinators.



**1.** In your garden journal, write "Critters in the Garden" at the top of the next blank page. The following activity will be completed on this page.

2. Visit or observe your garden at different times of the day. Look for visitors, such as birds, bugs or other small critters.

**3**. Choose two or three visitors and draw a picture of each. Use a magnifying glass if necessary to see them close up.

4. Research the visitors you've drawn using the internet, the library or a local gardener to learn more about them. Find out whether the visitors are beneficial or creating an imbalance in the ecosystem. Indicate this underneath each drawing, along with the name of the critter.

**Optional:** Write short notes beside the picture as a reminder. For example:

- If critter is helpful, how? How can the garden attract more of them?
- If critter is harmful, how? What is the best way to discourage them?





#### Science

Observe, Identify, Match, Build, Research

#### **Mathematics**

Measure

#### Language Arts

Comprehend, Read, Write, Describe

#### **Visual Arts**

Design, Draw, Create, Colour

#### Climate



Habitat Creation & Biodiversity



Soil Stewardship



Food Security & Sovereignty



#### 4.1 Example



## 4.1 Creating habitat for critters

**1.** While observing critters in the garden, have students gather some natural materials that will promote bug habitat on the surface of the garden.

2. If you haven't mulched the garden yet, use this as an opportunity to introduce mulch to protect the soil from the sun and to encourage diverse habitat within the garden. Mulching also lessens the watering needs of plants.

**3.** Have youth name the items they have selected before they place them. Ask students to explain why they believe it will help create a good environment for critters to thrive.

### **Tips and Tools**

You can download and use free Identifier apps for critters or plants, to help with identifying.

There are many ways to discourage common garden pests. Monitor the critters, where they're hanging out and when, and research options for best traps or natural deterrents depending on your situation.

Attract birds to the garden with birdhouses, feeders, and birdbaths. Birds eat many insects, including beetles, caterpillars, earwigs, snails, and slugs.

#### 4.1 Materials:

- Mulch (can be straw, or leaves/ other natural material
- hollow sticks and dried plant stalks

## 4.3 Garden visitor matching game

Can you tell the difference between harmful and helpful garden visitors? Draw a line to match each visitor to its description. Answers at the bottom of the page.



### **Tips and Tools**

Did you know that some pollinators have favourite colours? Growing plants in a pollinator's favourite colours may attract more of them to the garden. Bees love purple, blue, violet, white and yellow. Butterflies love pink, purple, red, yellow and orange.

Have students explore the question: Why do pollinators help plants produce more food?

For an older group next ask: What does this mean for our food system?

Click for next lesson:

**Garden Lesson 5:** The Dirt on Soil