

The Amazing Earthworm!

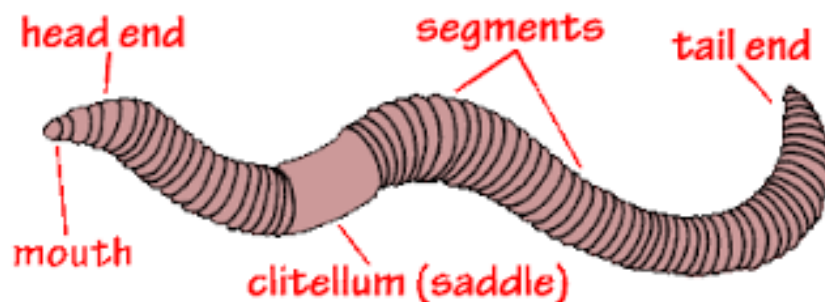
Materials:

- Video - National Geographic Kids - Earthworms (Zooville episode 42)
- Worm fun fact sheet
- Worms! (find in bait shops or the garden)
- paper plates, paper towels or anything else a worm can comfortably crawl around on
- Premade worm farm or the supplies to make one (dirt, sand, glass jar or tank, something to place in center of tank, leaves and scraps and a box to place on top) **instructions here:** <http://www.science-sparks.com/2013/06/17/make-your-own-wormery/>

Lesson:

- Show video
- Place one or two worms on plate in center of kids tables
- As they observe the worms share some fun facts and discuss how they help us as gardeners
- If time allows build the worm farm together in class or use pre made one
- Place worms in farm and discuss how to care for it
- Wash hands
- Check back on worms over the next few weeks. They should be mixing the different layers of sand and soil and bringing rotting leaves into soil as well.

The Amazing Earth Worm!



Did you know?

- Earthworms have no ears or eyes. They do have one end of their body that is more sensitive to light than the other.
- The reason that worms feel slimy is because they secrete a fluid that helps them to crawl and dig better through dirt, all while keeping their skin moist.
- Each small part of the body of the earthworm (segments) are covered with hair like bristles that are used by the worms for wriggling through dirt and to sense touch.
- Earthworms actually breathe through their skin.
- Earthworms have 5 hearts!
- If an earthworm gets injured and part of their body is cut off from another, they can replace that part by growing another. This only works for the part of the original worm that still has the head. Reproducing parts is also very difficult for the worms, but it can be done.
- Do not cut a worm in half! You will kill it, just like you would any other living creature.
- They come to the surface during rains (especially in the spring) so they can move overland. The temporarily wet conditions give worms a chance to move safely to new places.
- Believe it or not, earthworms are not boys or girls. They are both, at the same time. All adult earthworms can lay cocoons, or eggs.
- When they are born, earthworms are actually hatched from very tiny eggs that look a little like lemons. Baby earthworms look just like adults after they hatch. It takes them from 10 to around 55 weeks to become adults.
- The largest earthworm ever found measured 22 feet long and of the types found in the United States they can grow up to 14 inches long.
- Despite the fact that they may not seem like the smartest creatures, earthworms actually do have the ability to remember some things. You can even teach them to avoid dangers.

How Earthworms Help in the Garden:

- Worms love to eat both soil and fallen leaves. They eat their body weight in these materials each day.
- If earthworms are native to the area, then they will help gardeners and plants by mixing air with the soil and loosening it around the roots of various plants. Because of this, earthworms are very important to the ecosystem.
- The castings produced by worms (or earthworm poop) is actually a very desirable natural fertilizer for plants. Some gardeners even purchase earthworm castings to mix with their soil.