

Secret Smells Game

Wyoming Ag-tivity

Objectives:

- Students will discover how insects use pheromones to communicate.

Activity Procedure:

Obviously, insects cannot talk. However, like other species, they have developed specialized forms of communication. Many use special scents and hormones called pheromones. Many insects identify another as a potential mate (or a potential enemy) by scent recognition.

People are so accustomed to talking that it may be difficult for your students to imagine using scents instead of language to identify and recognize each other. One fun way to illustrate the concept is by playing the Secret Smells Game. Ahead of time, prepare the film canisters by placing in each one a cotton ball that has been dipped into a scent of some sort. Make two film canisters using each scent, and then mix them up.

Tell the students they are going to be insects. Their mission is to search out their partner insect using only their sense of smell. They absolutely positively cannot talk! Ask each student to take one film canister, and lift the lid just long enough to smell the scent. Then ask them to go from person to person, sniffing containers, to try to identify the student who has the scent that matches their own. See how long it takes all the students to locate their Secret Smell Partners.

POSSIBLE SCENTS TO USE

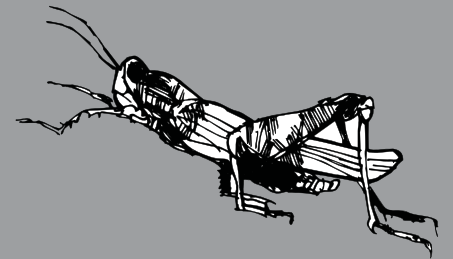
- Peanut Butter
- Cheese
- Orange Juice
- Perfume
- Soap
- Vanilla
- Chocolate
- Herbs

Materials Adapted from Junior Master Gardener Teacher/Leader Guide



Materials

- Black plastic film canisters (one per student) or other opaque jars
- Cotton balls
- Variety of scents (possibilities listed below)



Estimated Time

30-45 Minutes

Grades 5-6