

Activity 29:

Lizard Lair



Objective: Distinguish between and understand the benefits of lizards in a garden; construct a shelter to attract lizards to a garden



Time: 45 minutes



Materials: Large clay pot (10" or larger), sticks, flat rock or small clay saucer, and golf ball to baseball-sized rocks to fill the clay pot

Lizards are found though the world. They can be some of the most interesting, colorful and beneficial additions to a garden habitat. Your JMG group can welcome lizards to your garden area by creating a Lizard Lair that provides a shelter and even a perfect place to bask in the sun.

Ask the group to describe lizards, how they look, how they act, where they live, what they eat, etc. Have the students share stories of lizards they may have come across, including what colors of lizards they have seen, how big they are, what they saw the lizard doing, etc. During the discussion, point out these cool lizard facts:

- Lizards are reptiles (they are cold-blooded and must rely on the environment to warm or cool their bodies)

- Lizards will often seek shelter in rocks, brush piles or other small, confined areas
- Some lizards can change their color to blend into their surroundings (this is a cool adaptation that has helped them to survive by being better at hiding and hunting!)
- Most lizards commonly found around the home feed on insects and spiders
- Most lizards have the ability to lose and grow back a tail (tails can be lost as they are escaping from a predator)
- Some lizards are legless
- Some lizards can chirp, squeak or make other sounds

Tell the group that they will be creating a home for lizards in their garden. Ask the group of gardeners go on a scavenger

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hunt to look for the materials to create the garden's Lizard Lair. They will need to find:

- golf ball to baseball-sized rocks
- any rocks with a flat shape
- thick sticks.

Have students carefully place rocks and sticks in a large pot until full. Gently rock the container back and forth to settle the contents and place the container in a protected area that receives partial sunlight. Place flat stones or small clay saucer atop the rocks to create a basking stone for the lizards. Use additional rocks or sticks if needed to make a firm base for the basking stone.

Ask the group to make predictions about how effective the Lizard Lair might be in attracting more lizards to the garden

habitat. Have the students create a log of lizard sightings in the garden area on a calendar simply by placing a tally mark for each different time a lizard is spotted. Also ask students to make a note of the time of day the lizard sitting took place to determine if lizards are more active during certain times of the day.

Multiple Lizard Lairs can be placed around different areas of the garden to attract larger numbers of the reptiles. Remind the group that as they work to include more components of habitat that are meeting the specific needs of specific wildlife, they are more likely to have those wildlife make a home in the garden area!

If acrylic paints are available, allow the students to decorate the Lizard Lairs!

Did You Know?

Lizards and other reptiles do not produce their own heat.

The same light and heat energy that plants and other living things need to survive also provides the heat that lizards and other reptiles need to allow their bodies to function. Lizards will find surfaces, like rocks, that are warmed by the sun and will bask in the sun to warm their bodies.