

Studying Caterpillars in a Viewer Gives You Wings!

Activities to Teach Pupils about Irish Butterflies

Background Info and Fun Facts

- September is a great time to watch the caterpillar of the cabbage white butterfly. The adult butterfly lays between 40 and 100 eggs at a time on cabbage and nasturtium plants.
- Caterpillars of the large white are black, white and yellow. They are on the outside of plants as they contain a toxic substance which makes a disgusting meal!
- Small white caterpillars are green and yellow and are better camouflaged
- Plant buddleia shrubs around your school and some nasturtiums and cabbages in raised beds and you will always have butterflies. Also leave a wild space in school for nettles and thistles to grow. Some other butterflies lay eggs on these plants also.



Curriculum Links

Subject	Strand	Strand Unit
Science	Living Things, Materials	Animal Life, Materials and Change
English	Oral Language, Writing	Writing independently in a diary

Lesson Content (Junior and Senior)

1. Cut the bottom off the water bottle with a strong pair of scissors
2. Fill the jar with water, turn the bottle upside down and attach to the lid of the bottle with masking tape
3. Place the cabbage, stems of which have eggs on them, into the jar and stuff around the jar with cotton wool so caterpillars won't fall in! Five or six eggs is enough
4. Place the j-cloth over the cut bottom of the jar and tie with an elastic band
5. Keep the viewer in class. Get the pupils to keep a diary of changes they see.
6. Remove caterpillars with a paint brush when cleaning the viewer. Empty out frass, water and wood and replace the latter two. Watch the caterpillars change to pupae and when they do, leave the container in a shed over the winter
7. In late spring they will emerge as butterflies and can be released in a ceremony at school!



Resources

Masking tape, a 5 litre water bottle, jar, cotton wool, j-cloth, elastic band, cabbage leaves and 5 or 6 cabbage white caterpillars

Web Links

- www.schooleartheid.ie/paddys-school-garden/video-sep-caterpillar.html for a video by Paddy Madden of this lesson and www.schooleartheid.ie/pdf/intouch/WorkingInTandem_Sept11.pdf (which was first published in the INTO Intouch magazine)
- Cheat and see the full life cycle of non native Painted Lady butterflies in just three weeks by

Autumn - An Fómhar

September - Méan Fómhair

ordering hatching sets on www.insectlore.eu. Everything is delivered. Just make sure to do this activity in autumn and not winter or spring as the released butterflies will die in the cold.

- www.irishbutterflies.com and www.butterflyireland.com have information and images of all butterflies found in Ireland and Britain
- More information can also be found in the book Looking At Nature by Elsie Proctor