

CURIOSITY AT HOME

BUTTERFLY PUDDLE STATION



Have you ever noticed butterflies gathering on puddles after a rainstorm? You can help create a healthy habitat for these important pollinators by creating an artificial mud puddle station for your yard or garden.

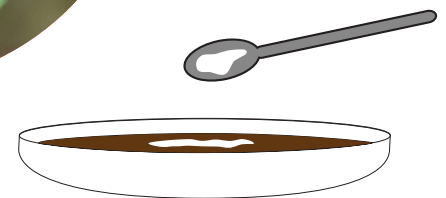
MATERIALS

- Pie pan or other wide shallow dish
- Dirt
- Measuring spoon
- Salt (sea salt is best)
- Water
- **Optional:**
 - Garden compost
 - Small rocks or pebbles
 - Science notebook or journal
 - Something to write/draw with
 - Digital camera or phone with camera

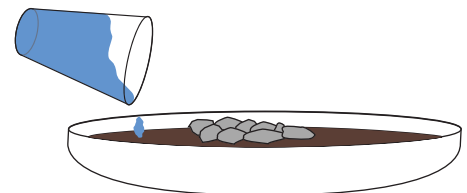


PROCEDURE

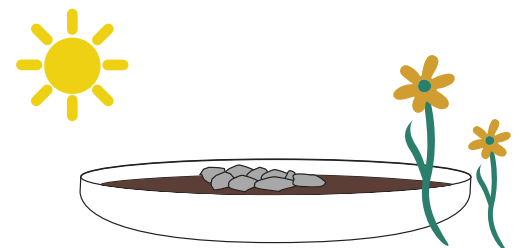
- Fill your pan or dish with dirt. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and mix to combine. You can also add a few spoonfuls of garden compost, if available.
- Slowly add water until the dirt has a thick, muddy consistency. You can also place some small rocks on top of the mud to create a dry area for butterflies to land on.
- Place your mud puddle station outside, preferable near flowering plants.
- Observe your mud puddle station over several days. What butterflies do you notice using it? What other insects or wildlife are benefiting from it?
- Add more water as needed if dirt dries out. Refresh with additional salt and compost approximately once a month.



Fill the pan or dish with dirt. Add 1 teaspoon of salt



Add water until dirt has a thick, muddy consistency



Place mud puddle outside near flowering plants

Experiment continued on next page...



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DID YOU KNOW

Like all living things, butterflies need water to survive. Butterflies also need minerals to stay healthy. Butterflies use their long tube-shaped tongues, or proboscises, to suck up these essential salts and nutrients from moist soil and puddles. This behavior is called puddling.

TRY THIS

- Add a butterfly food area to your mud puddle station. Place a small dish inside or next to your mud puddle station. Fill the dish with some pieces of overripe fruit, like bananas, apples, and oranges. What kinds of fruits do butterflies at your station prefer? As the fruits become mushier, do you notice more or less butterflies at your station?
- Research pollinator-friendly plants to attract more beneficial butterflies and bees to your garden. What are some beneficial plants for feeding hungry caterpillars? Which flowering plants attract adult butterflies? Check out the [Pollinator Garden](#) at Pacific Science Center to learn more about Pacific Northwest native plants that attract and support native pollinators throughout the year.
- Use the Seek app to identify butterflies and other insects that you notice at your mud puddle station. You can also take pictures of butterflies at your station and share your observations through the iNaturalist app or website (get an adult to help set up a free account). By sharing these observations, you can connect with other naturalists and help professional researchers learn more about the types of local pollinators in your area. Check out the [iNaturalist](#) website to learn more.



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3–5 GRADE EXPLORATION

- Observe a butterfly (or other insect) at your mud puddle station for at least 5 minutes. Use drawings and/or words to record your observations in the spot below, or in your science notebook.

Experiment continued on next page...



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3–5 GRADE EXPLORATION *continued...*

- Keep a table of the number of butterflies you see with the date/time. Try keeping track every day for at least one week.

Date	Number of butterflies at mud puddle station	Other Observations

- Are there any patterns to butterfly activity around your mud puddle station? Do you notice more butterflies in the morning, afternoon, or evening? How does the weather affect the frequency of butterfly puddling? What other patterns do you notice?



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