

# Centipede



GARDEN EARTH  
NATURALIST  

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ECO-SERVICE CARDS

# CENTIPEDE

FAMILY: Lithobiidae

ORDER: Lithobiomorpha

## IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 1/2 - 7 inches long
- ◆ long body with many segments, each with one pair of legs (15 -177 pairs, always an odd number)
- ◆ often brightly colored
- ◆ two long, flexible antennae
- ◆ front legs modified into fangs with poison glands



### Where to Look:

Centipedes are found in warm moist places such as in the soil and leaf litter, under logs and stones, in caves. They are nocturnal and avoid light.

### Who Eats It?

Parasitic wasps will attack the larvae of centipedes.



### LIFE CYCLE

The female centipede lays eggs in the soil and covers them. In some species, the young continuously add segments and legs as they molt. Other species are born with all their segments and legs but are helpless and must be protected by the mother for several months.

### What It Eats.

Centipedes are fierce carnivores and feed on soil invertebrates such as soft bodied insects and larvae, pill bugs, snails, slugs and worms. Large centipedes will attack small invertebrates which they sense with their antennae and paralyze with the poisonous fangs.



### Did You Know

Centipedes can run extremely fast. At top speed a centipede may have only a few legs touching the ground at any given time.

### Role in the Ecosystem

As predators, centipedes play an important role in population control.