

Pillbug



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST

ECO-SERVICE CARDS

PILLBUG

ORDER: Isopoda

PHYLUM: Arthropoda

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 1/4 - 1/2 inch long
- ◆ oval-shaped, convex, segmented body
- ◆ gray, flattened plates (called the exoskeleton) cover each segment
- ◆ curls into a ball when disturbed (often called “roly-polies”)
- ◆ 10 pairs of small walking legs



Where to Look:

Pillbugs are found in damp places in gardens and forests. Look under stones and logs or in the leaf litter.

Who Eats It?

Pillbugs are eaten by predatory insects and other arthropods.



LIFE CYCLE

While most land crustaceans lay their eggs in water, pill bugs lay their eggs in a brood pouch which is filled with water. The young look like small adults and as they grow they molt several times, growing a new exoskeleton each time.

What It Eats.

Pillbugs eat rotting leaves and bark and the fungi that grow on it.



Did You Know

Pill bugs must stay moist because they breathe through gill-like structures on their abdomen. This is a remnant of their evolutionary past when they lived in water.

Role in the Ecosystem

Pillbugs are important recyclers.