

How to set...

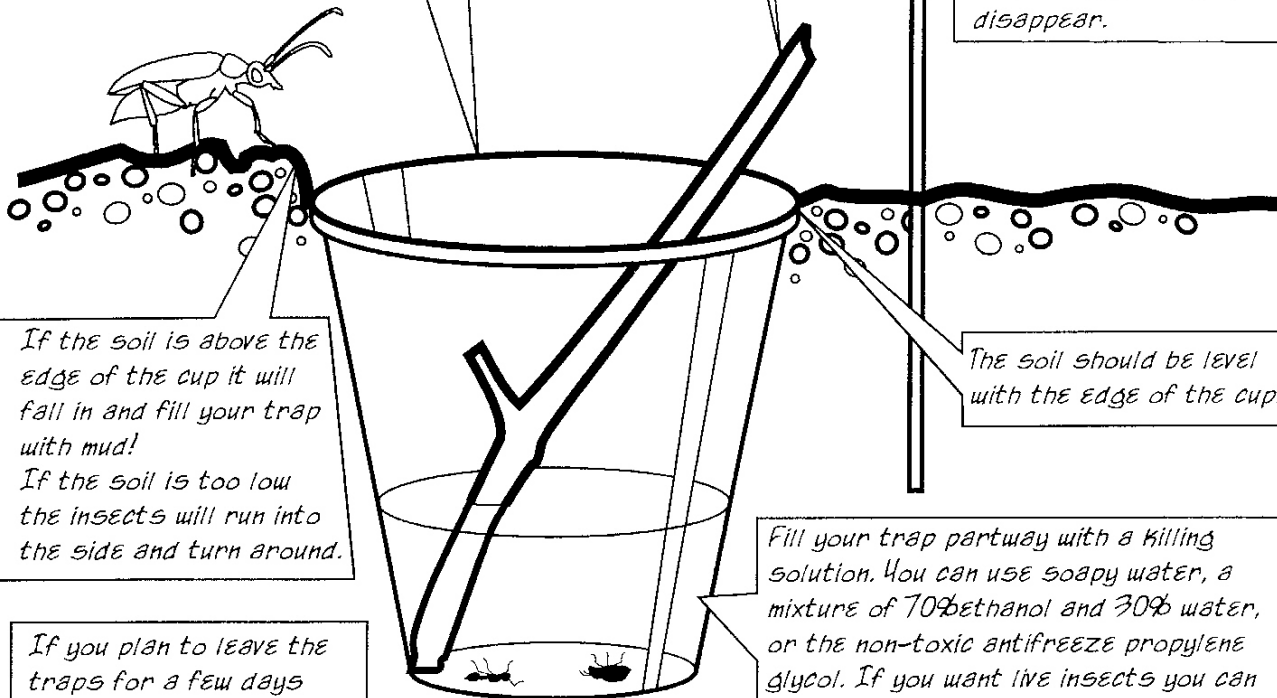
Pitfall Traps

You want to catch insects, but believe me, you don't want to find a drowned lizard or mouse in your trap. A stick will allow larger animals to escape if they fall in.

Any small container, like a plastic cup will work for a pitfall trap. If you have jars with screw-on lids you can just screw the top on when you collect your samples. Otherwise you will need to bring containers to pour your samples into. Don't forget a label!

Make sure each trap is marked so you can find it again. Give each one an individual number, and write the number on the jar when you collect the trap.

Coyotes and other animals are curious about new things in their habitat. You should expect that a few of your traps may get dug up or disappear.



If the soil is above the edge of the cup it will fall in and fill your trap with mud!

If the soil is too low the insects will run into the side and turn around.

If you plan to leave the traps for a few days you may need to add more liquid as they dry up.

The soil should be level with the edge of the cup.

Fill your trap partway with a killing solution. You can use soapy water, a mixture of 70% ethanol and 30% water, or the non-toxic antifreeze propylene glycol. If you want live insects you can remove the stick and leave it empty, but some insects will escape.

You can leave pitfall traps in the ground for 1-3 days. They are great for sampling ground-dwelling and nocturnal arthropods. If you want to sample just nocturnal or diurnal species you can cover the traps for part of the day.

cc Michele Lanen, 2008