



Toad Tales and Homes

Introduction

In the book ***Jo MacDonald Had a Garden***, author Mary Quattlebaum introduces children to the plants and creatures in a garden and shows how to create gardens that benefit both people and wildlife. In this activity and its connections, children focus on toads, explore their growth cycle through writing and drawing, and create a toad home.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Several pieces of paper
- ◆ Colored markers or crayons
- ◆ Styrofoam flower pot for toad home

Procedure

1. Have children find the toad in the pictures in the book. What is it doing?
2. Explain that the pictures show the adult toad but that its life cycle includes three stages of growth: eggs, tadpoles, and adult toads. Adult toads lay eggs in water (often ponds) but live on land.
3. Show children pictures of these three stages in other books or on the internet. How does the toad move at each stage? What parts of its body allow it to move? What does it eat?
4. Have children act out the different stages (still eggs, wriggly, swimming tadpoles, leaping adult toads).
5. Explain that when a tadpole becomes a toad, it leaves its pond home and lives on land. Adult toads breathe and drink through their skin, though, and so they like moist places and even burrow in moist soil. Ask students to write a story about a young toad that leaves its pond, searches for a home, and finds a garden with moist soil and shelter from predators. What does it do when it finds a toad home (as created in Nature Connections)? Ask children to illustrate their story.

Key Concepts

- ◆ Environments are the space, conditions, and factors that affect an individual's and a population's ability to survive and their quality of life.
- ◆ Plants and animals have life cycles.
- ◆ Each organism has different structures for different functions.

For standards correlation please see our website.

Nature Connections

◆ Children can create individual toad homes for backyard gardens or, as a group, one or two homes for school garden. Turn pot upside down; cut two large arches into rims—one across from the other. Cut a small hole in top of pot. Find a sheltered spot in garden and dig pot into moist soil deep enough so that it is secure. Make sure toad has enough room to enter through the arches. (Two arches ensure that toad can escape through one should a predator try to enter by the other.) Every few days sprinkle a little water through the hole in the top to ensure that the soil stays moist. Do not disturb toads.

◆ Research differences between frogs and toads.

Additional Resources

Life Cycle of a Toad

http://www.dougwechsler.com/toad/toad_life_cycle.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QBqp068jkI>

FrogWatch USA

<http://www.aza.org/frogwatch/>

