

Get sweeping!

If you want to catch a few insects at a time to look at, then why not make a sweep net?



HRH The Prince of Wales celebrates National Insect Week June 2012 by sweeping for insects, instructed by Dr Luke Tilley, National Insect Week co-ordinator.

Homemade sweep nets are great for swishing through grass and catching small insects, although not really suitable for butterflies or moths. Insect sweep nets can be bought of course but they can be expensive, so this method is definitely cheaper and great to practice with.

To make a sweep net you just need a coat hanger, a bamboo cane (no more than 1m long) and a wide carrier bag or old pillow case - white or pale is best so that you can see what you catch.

Pull out the coat hanger to make a circle but don't untwist or cut it. Straighten out the hook and slot it into the bamboo cane and secure with some tape. Attach the carrier bag or pillow case to the coat hanger using strong tape and there you go. A sweep net!

Find an area of long grass on a warm day and walk through it whilst moving the net gently from side to side in a 'S' shape, making sure that the mouth of the net hits the grass first so that the insects go into your net.

When you have moved the net back and forth 10 or more times, it's time to inspect your catch. Leave the net open for a few seconds before emptying to allow any bees or wasps you have caught to escape before you take a look. Empty the net into a shoe box or sweet jar (a white tray is best of all) by reversing it through the coat hanger frame.

Most people are surprised how much they catch. Have a look at the [BBC Breathing Places website](#) for a [similar sweep net](#) and other ideas too.