
Hoptoad Habitats: Toad Abode

Summary: Toad Abodes, or toad houses, and other habitat projects are simple, fun ways to learn about habitat and encourage personal action. A toad house provides shelter for the toad, and is a good example of reusing products instead of throwing them away. They will hide in the shelter of dense grasses or flowers, under rocks, in retaining walls, and even under terra cotta pots. Students can choose from the following three projects to enhance amphibian habitat in their own yards or schoolyard.

Objective: Students learn practical projects to provide habitat for amphibians through reuse of disposable items.

Grades: 3-5

Subject: Science, art

Skills: art

Materials: Old, broken terra cotta pots, outdoor paints, disposable pie pans, rocks/pebbles

Activities

1. Toad House

Most people have a broken terra cotta pot lying around. Instead of tossing it in the trash, turn it upside down in a secluded portion of the yard or garden. A small crack can serve as the door. If there is no “door,” prop the pot slightly up with a rock so the toad can access the interior. Toads particularly like the house if it is lined with sand, which they will dig into. Have students bring in broken pots, or collect them from other teachers and neighbors. Then have students decorate their toad houses with paints, stickers, whatever they choose. Toads, dragonflies, and other related themes can be painted on them. The Houses can then be taken home, and/or placed in the schoolyard habitat. Photos of a toad house are also on-line at www.nwf.org/habitats.

2. Rock Piles

Build a low pile of rocks, with a shady, cool space in the middle. Toads will hide from the sun in the day here, and wait for passing insects at night. This is a nice accent in a native flower bed or vegetable garden. And the toads will eat your slugs and insects that damage the plants!



3. Mini-ponds

Another reuse idea is to use the disposable pie pans and planting pot saucers as miniature “pools.” These can be placed in a shallow depression in the flower bed, garden, or corner of a yard to serve as a water source for toads and other wildlife. Line the pool with either pebbles or sand. Toads will visit for a nice soak, and even songbirds will stop by for a drink and a bath.