

#### Common name

Latin name

Food chain level: Who eats who? Level 1 is a top predator and level 7 is a decomposer.

No. of legs: **No legs, 4 legs, 6 legs, 8 legs or more?** 

Length: **How big is your** compost creature?

Life span: **How long does** your creature live?



Garden Organic is the national charity for organic growing. The Master Composter programme is a network of enthusiastic volunteers across the UK, who promote home composting in their local communities. To find out more about Garden Organic contact us:

www.gardenorganic.org.uk enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk o24 7630 3517



# How to play

'Top of the Heap'

2-4 players or groups. Deal out all the cards face down. The first player chooses a category from their top card (e.g. legs, length, life span) the next player reads out their value of the same category. The person with the highest value wins and collects the other players' top cards. The person with all the cards at the end wins!

Other ideas: creature ID bingo, create a food web, snap (with two packs), or your own idea!



#### Woodlouse

Oniscus asellus

Food chain level: 6

No. of legs: 14

Length: 1.4cm

Life span: Up to 4 years

Info: Also called sow bugs or pill bugs, they break down cellulose in woody material.
They curl up when threatened.



# Common Centipede Lithobius fortificatus

Food chain level: 4

No. of legs: 30

Length: 2-3cm

Life span: Has been known to live for 11 years

Info: They have a single pair of legs for each body segment and are fast moving predators.



# Brandling / Tiger Worm Eisenia fetida

Food chain level: 7

No. of legs: **o** 

Length: 5cm

Life span: 3-5 years

Info: Vital decomposers in the compost heap these stripy red worms produce highly fertile worm casts.



## **Springtails**

class Collembolans

Food chain level: 6

No. of legs: 6

Length: 1.4cm

Life span: Up to 4 years

Info: Commonly found in compost, these detritivores can jump around with their spring loaded 'furcula'.



### Hedgehog

Erinaceus europaeus

Food chain level: 2

No. of legs: 4

Length: 25cm

Life span: 2-3 years

Info: Hedgehogs are in decline in the UK, a compost heap will provide a valuable source of insects to eat.



# **Nematodes** *Phylum Nematoda*

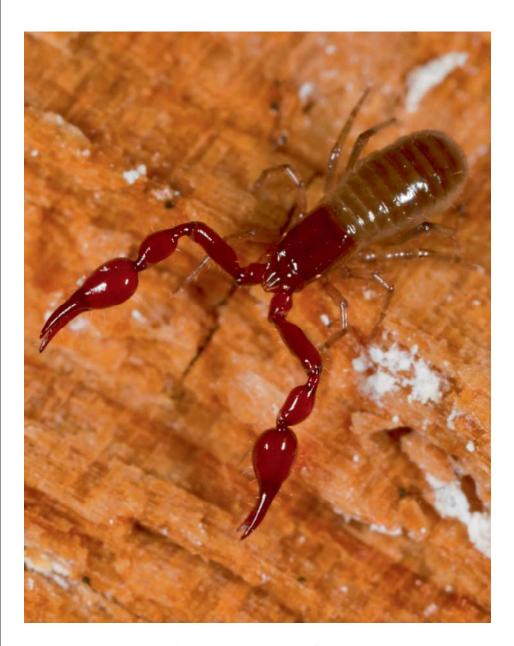
Food chain level: 6

No. of legs: **o** 

Length: less than 2.5mm

Life span: Up to 2 months

Info: Small but important, these worm-like creatures can feed on bacteria, fungi, plants or other creatures.



# Pseudoscorpion

Pseudoscorpionida

Food chain level: 5

No. of legs: 8

Length: **2.5-8 mm** 

Life span: 1-3 years

Info: False scorpions are predators in the heap, using poison sacs in their pincers.

Often hitch a ride on flies.



# Black Garden Ant (worker) Lasius niger

Food chain level: 5

No. of legs: 6

Length: 2-5mm

Life span: 1-3 years

Info: Ants feed on seeds, fungi and other insects. They help create air pockets and benefit the compost.



#### Mite

Subclass of Acari

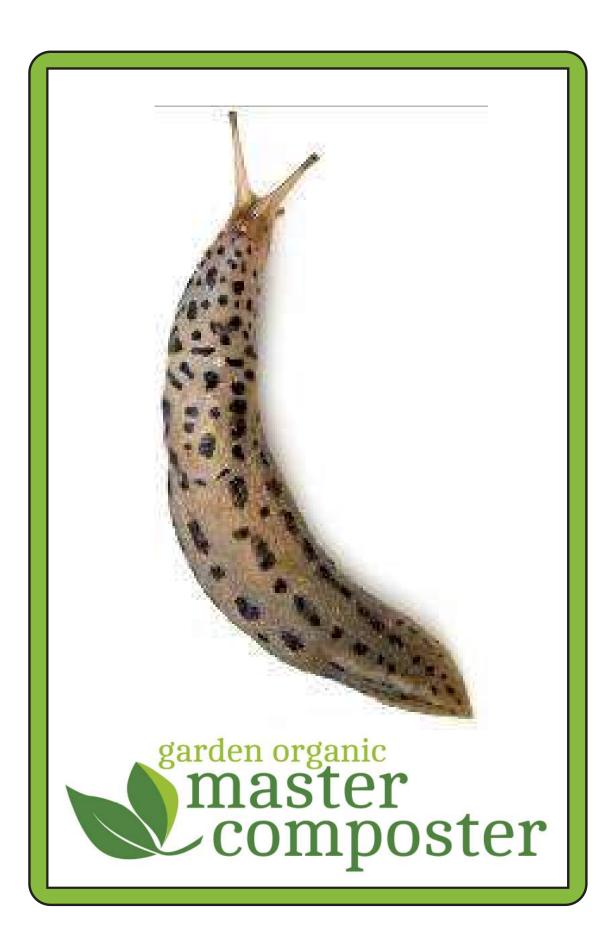
Food chain level: 8

No. of legs: 8

Length: **0.08-16 mm** 

Life span: Days to months

Info: These arachnids are numerous in the heap, some are predators, and some are decomposers.



### **Leopard Slug**

Limax maximus

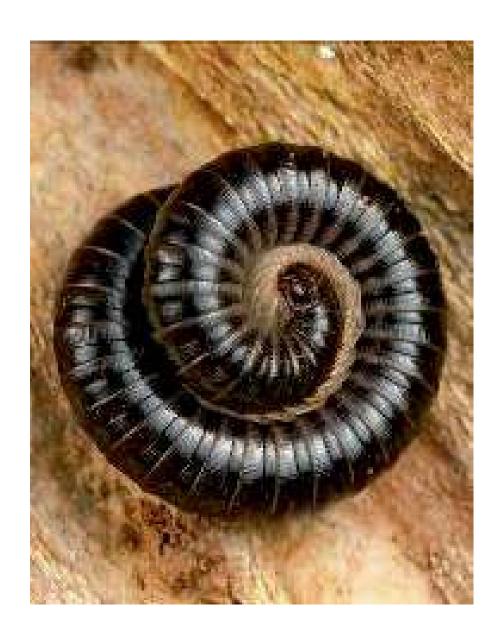
Food chain level: 5

No. of legs: **o** 

Length: 10-20cm

Life span: 2-3 years

Info: Feeding on dead plants, fungi and other slugs they are often called the 'Gardeners' Friend'.



# Common Millipede Tachypodoiulus niger

Food chain level: 7

No. of legs: **Around 100** 

Length: Up to 6cm

Life span: Up to 9 years

Info: Slow moving, with two pairs of legs per segment. They feed mainly on decaying plant material.





#### **Violet Ground Beetle**

Carabus violaceus

Food chain level: 3

No. of legs: 6

Length: 3cm

Life span: 2-3 years

Info: Beetles and their larvae are invaluable! In the heap they feed on slugs, snails and other pests.



Photograph © Ray Spence



### **European Earwig**

Forficula auricularia.

Food chain level: 4

No. of legs: 6

Length: 1-2cm

Life span: 1 year

Info: Mostly feeding on decaying matter they use their back pincers for defence.



# Common Fruit Fly Drosophila melanogaster

Food chain level: 7

No. of legs: 6

Length: 2cm

Life span: One month

Info: Often seen in compost heaps and hovering around fruit, even indoors. They are slow fliers.



### Actinobacteria (phylum)

Genus: Streptomyces has over 500 species

Food chain level: 8

No. of legs: o

Length: branching structure **0.5-2.0µm in diameter.** 

Life span: Days to months

Info: Forms greyish cobweb like growths on the compost. Pleasant earthy smell.



#### **Wood Mouse**

Apodemus sylvaticus

Food chain level: 2

No. of legs: 4

Length: 11cm body, 11cm

tail

Life span: Up to 1 year.

Info: Small, commonly found rodents, they will often shelter in the compost heap.



# Common Toad Bufo bufo

Food chain level: 2

No. of legs: 4

Length: Up to 15cm

Life span: 10-12 years

Info: Toads often hibernate in the compost heap, and also eat pests such as slugs and snails.



#### **Grass Snake**

Natrix natrix

Food chain level: 1

No. of legs: **o** 

Length: Over 1m

Life span: Up to 25 years

Info: Warm compost heaps provide ideal conditions for grass snakes. Slow worms also enjoy the heap!