

 **Secret Smells Game**

- Objective:** To discover how insects use pheromones to communicate.
Time: 30 to 45 minutes.
Materials: Black plastic film canisters (one per student), or other opaque jars, cotton balls, a variety of scents (possibilities listed below).

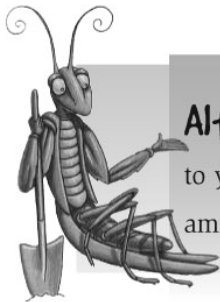
Obviously, insects cannot talk. However, like other species, they have developed specialized forms of communication. Many use special scents and hormones called pheromones. Many insects identify another as a potential mate (or a potential enemy) by scent recognition.

People are so accustomed to talking that it may be difficult for your gardeners to imagine using scents instead of language to identify and recognize each other. One fun way to illustrate the concept is by playing the Secret Smells Game. Ahead of time, prepare the film canisters by placing in each one a cotton ball that has been dipped into a scent of some sort. Make two film canisters using each scent, and then mix them up.

Tell the gardeners they are going to be insects. Their mission is to search out their partner insect using only their sense of smell. They absolutely positively cannot talk! Ask each student to take one film canister, and lift the lid just long enough to smell the scent. Then ask them to go from person to person, sniffing containers, to try to identify the student who has the scent that matches their own. See how long it takes all the gardeners to locate their Secret Smell Partners.

Some possible scents to use:

- ✓ Cinnamon
- ✓ Scented soap or lotion
- ✓ Chocolate
- ✓ Mint-flavored mouthwash
- ✓ Perfume
- ✓ Vanilla, peppermint or other types of extract or flavorings



Although there are many possible scents, be kind to your gardeners' noses. Avoid harsh-smelling cleansers or ammonia-based products.



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