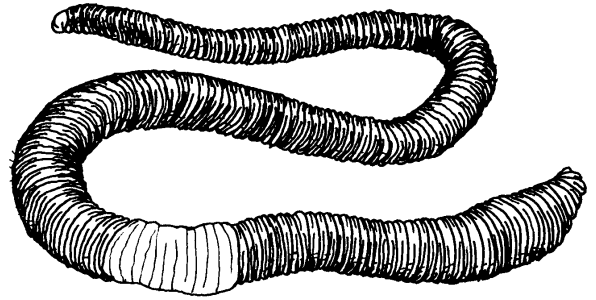


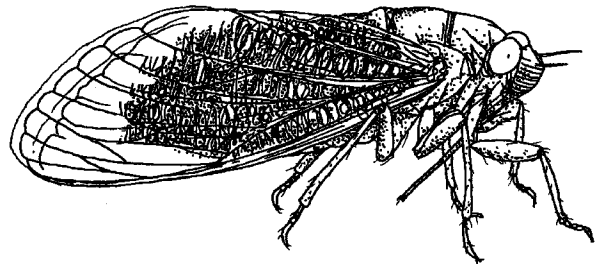
# What Do Your Backyard Critters Eat?

Here are three common underground critters and a description of the food they need to survive. Use this as a reference for the next steps of this activity. You may also use animal guidebooks, texts, or the Internet to conduct further research.

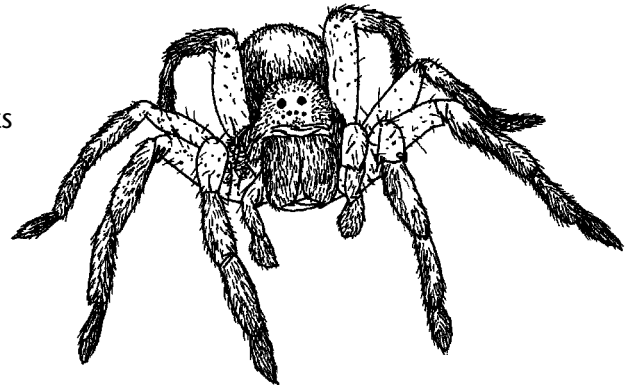
**Earthworm:** The many types of earthworms in Illinois all need food and water to survive. Some earthworms live in the top few inches of the soil and others like to stay several feet below the soil's surface. But they all need to get oxygen, so they have to have some tunnels to the surface in order to breathe. Earthworms love to eat slimy bacteria and fungi found on decomposing leaves, stems, and roots of plants. Some earthworms will even drag leaves underground so the leaves can decompose and provide a tasty meal. Earthworms don't have lungs like us—they pull oxygen through their skin to breathe! If their skin dries out, they have a very difficult time getting oxygen, so it is important for them to stay moist as much as possible. However if they are stuck in puddles for too long, they can't get enough oxygen either, so they like their habitat to be moist but not underwater.



**Cicada:** We often hear the adult cicada buzzing in the trees in the fall and you may have even found their empty shells stuck on trees or buildings. Most people never see the young cicadas that live underground sucking plant juices from roots for one to 17 years before they dig their way out of the soil and hatch into adults. Once they mature into adults, cicadas focus on mating and laying eggs, and they no longer eat nutrients from roots.



**Wolf Spider:** These large hairy spiders do not make webs. Instead, they hunt for food like insects and even other spiders. They like to hide in leaf litter and bushes. A wolf spider will travel in search of food and habitat. In the fall, they look for warm spots like basements and niches near buildings where they can live for the winter.



This worksheet supports the **Food Source Habitat** activity on The Field Museum's *Underground Adventure* Web site: [www.fieldmuseum.org/undergroundadventure](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/undergroundadventure).

