

Roly-Poly Pill Bugs

by Cynthia Sherwood



Some people are afraid of bugs such as spiders or beetles. But there is one bug that just about everybody likes—pill bugs. If you ever pick one up, you know why its nickname is “roly-poly.” A pill bug rolls up into a tight little ball to protect itself. This bug is scared of you, not the other way around!

These little gray or brown bugs can be found almost everywhere in the United States except the desert. That is because they need to stay moist. But they can live in dry places like California thanks to lawn sprinklers. One of their favorite hang-outs is under damp flower pots.

Did you know that pill bugs have something in common with kangaroos? After her eggs hatch, the mother pill bug carries her young in a pouch under her belly. The little pill bugs stay there until they are big enough to be on their own.

Pill bugs also have something in common with snakes. Just as snakes shed their skin when it gets too small, pill bugs do too. This is called “molting.” A pill bug molts about five times until it is full-grown.

Pill bugs are a little like owls, too. Pill bugs are nocturnal, meaning they are most active at night. That is when they most like to wander around and look for food. And just like earthworms, pill bugs help break down plants in the soil. Pill bugs aren't just nice bugs. They are also interesting ones!

