Family Fun Activity #4
Who’s In This Soil?

Soil.
Or earth, ground, dirt.
It’s the outer layer of our planet.
The soil looks dead.
But it’s teeming with a hidden world of - life.
A world of tiny organisms and animals - moving around
and through the soil particles.

If you scoop up a handful of soil, you’ll probably find pebbles,
or some sand, bits of leaves and twigs, maybe an ant,
or an earthworm - and definitely decaying plants.

Soil provides the foundation for life on earth.
Plants grow in soil that provide food for us, and other animals.
Without soil – none of us could survive.

So – with this in mind – we’re going to dig down and be amazed!
Please – have an adult on hand – there might be some tiny, creepy crawly critters
living in the soil that like to bite!

Materials needed:
2 shoebox-sized boxes
digging tool
damp paper towel

1. Measure a 12 X 12 inch square in the ground.

2. DIG!
   Shovel the soil into one box. This will be your ‘sorting box’.

3. Shake the sorting box (a little) to help see the critters in the soil.

4. Place the damp paper towel at the bottom of the second box.
   This is your ‘critter box.
   Lift out any small critters from the ‘sorting box’ and gently place
   into the ‘critter box.’
   Beware of any small biting critters!
   Leave any critters that can be dangerous to you.
After you’ve placed the tiny critters into their box, cover the box with a lid – the critters have been living in the soil and are sensitive to light - and can dry out! They were living in the damp, dark soil.

5. Dump the leftover soil from the ‘sorting box’ next to the hole where you’re digging.

6. Keep digging until the hole is 12 inches deep. Look for more critters.

7. Identify your critters using the attached ID Sheet.

8. Return all the critters to the hole after you’ve identified them, and then gently push the soil pile back in the hole – on top of the critters.

Did you find critters you’d never seen before?

It would be fun to sample different kinds of soil – soil next to a pond, a stream, near a tree – wherever you see soil!

Enjoy Nature!
Be Considerate!
And Gently Cautious!