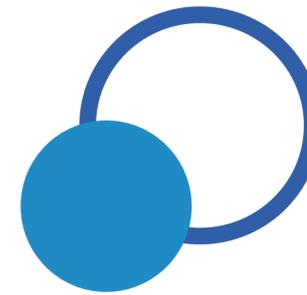


# A Garden

Imagine you have your very own garden. You've filled it with beautiful flowers and some of your favorite vegetables.

You started with seeds. With water and sunshine, they have grown. Even when they were just seedlings sprouting out of the soil, you could tell the different types of plant apart. Some had rounded leaves, and some had pointed leaves. Some were dark green, some were light green, and some were even kind of red. The different plants have different traits.

Now they are full-grown. Look at your zucchini plants. One has a long stem that trails out of the planting bed, and one has extra large leaves. But they all still look like zucchini plants. They all have small prickly hairs on their stems, and their flowers are bright yellow.





You may water your garden, but other animals also help it grow. For example, bumblebees fly between tomato flowers to collect nectar. When they visit the flowers, they rub against a part of the flower that's covered in pollen. Then they fly to another flower and transfer the pollen to that flower. In this way, they pollinate the tomato flowers. The pollinated flowers form tomatoes, which grow plump and sweet in the sunshine.



A garden like yours is full of life. There are the plants you've planted, of course, and the bees you can see flying around. But there are all kinds of other living things there, too. Run your hand through the soil in your garden and you may find earthworms and ants. When you're not around, a squirrel may drop down from a tree to grab one of those tomatoes, or a small garden snake may rest in the shade under a big zucchini leaf.

All the animals in your garden and beyond share a similar life cycle. They're born or they hatch, they grow to be adults, and then they produce young of their own. You may see some animals with their young around your garden.

Perhaps there's a robin's nest in a nearby tree. Adult robins make this amazing little home with twigs and sticks. Inside the nest, the female robin has laid her eggs. Soon the eggs will hatch. The chicks will push through their shells and into the world, and their parents will help them survive. The parents might grab some earthworms from your garden, and bring them back to the nest to feed their hungry young.



All the baby birds in the nest share many features, which are passed down from their parents. But they are different in some ways, too. When they grow up, one may have darker gray feathers on its back that camouflage it and help it to survive predators. Others may have brighter red feathers on their chests, which help them to attract mates and reproduce. Just as no two plants in your garden are exactly alike, no two animals are either.

