

HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and space - IS THE KEY.

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**Native Plant Profile.....Red Mulberry
(*Morus rubra* L.)**

Common Name

Red Mulberry

Family

Moraceae

General Description

- The only native mulberry and widespread in our area.
- These are medium sized deciduous trees with a short trunk, broad rounded crown and milky sap.



Leaves

- Alternate, broadly ovate, simple, variable in degree of lobing (often 3-lobed)
- Usually 3-5 inches long and coarsely serrated
- Dark green and rough above, pale green and usually hairy below.

Flower

Small, green, hanging catkins appearing in late spring

Fruit

- Resembling blackberries, small
- Red to purple in color when ripe in late spring

Height

- Can grow up to 50-60 feet tall and be 1 foot in diameter
- Usually has a short trunk that typically branches low

Bark

- Gray-brown and irregular with long, scaly ridges
- Younger trees may appear to look somewhat orange, especially when wet

Sun

Part sun to full sun.

Soil

Sandy loam to clay loam

Importance for Wildlife

Squirrels and many song and game birds as well as humans eat the fruit.

Did you know?

- The wood is resistant to decay and often used to make fence posts.
 - The Choctaw Indians wove cloaks from the fibrous inner bark of young mulberry shoots.
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Maryland Wildlife.....Long-Tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*)

Size & Weight

Body sizes range from 11-17 inches and 5-16 ounces

General Description

- Long-tailed weasels are relative small animal, with slender and elongated bodies.
- Males tend to be significantly larger than females.
- Overall pelt color is brown with yellowish white neck and underside.
- It is the most widely distributed weasel.

Reproduction

- Summer is the mating season.
- A female reaches maturity in 3-4 month, while males reach maturity in about 1 year.
- The female give birth to 4-8 young in the spring.
- The young are born blind with their eyes still covered with fur.
- The eyes open in about 36 days after birth.

Lifespan

The long-tailed weasel life span can be as short as one year. However, many of them can live up to 6 years in the wild.

Food

Weasels feed extensively on mice and other small mammals, but also utilize birds, rabbits and amphibians when available. They have been observed to follow a peculiar zigzag pattern while hunting.



Habitat

Long-tailed weasels can live in a fairly broad range of habitat types. In Maryland they are found in marshland, woodlands, intermittent grasslands and rocky outcrops. They are sporadically distributed throughout the state.

Behavior

- Mainly a nocturnal animal, but may be active during the day.
- The weasel can easily climb trees and swim, but spends most of its time on the ground.
- Usually nests in old burrows of other animals, sometimes under wood or rock piles.

Vocalizations

Has been known to trill and purr when it is content, but when frightened or alarmed they can release a strong smelling musk.

Similar Species

- Mink
- Skunk
- Fisher
- River otter

Did you Know?

In the northern United States the long-tailed weasel molts in the fall and their pelage (furry coat) becomes totally white, and they remain that color until they molt again in the spring when it returns to brown.

In the mid-Atlantic region (including Maryland) and farther south, they remain brown throughout the year.



Tips for Starting a Vegetable Garden

Tip #1- Plan in Advance

- Will you grow your vegetables and herbs in containers?
See Container Gardening: <http://www.hgic.umd.edu/content/documents/hg600.pdf>
- If not using containers, do you prefer using raised beds or digging/tilling the ground?
- Place taller crops on the north and west sides so they will not shade shorter plants.

Note For Beginners

When planning your garden, it's better to start too small than to start too large. If you begin with "too large," you may be overwhelmed by mid-summer. It's better to start small and expand a little every year.



Tip #2- Where to Build It

- Choose an area with level ground
- A spot that gets at least 6 hours of full sun each day (preferable more)
- Avoid trees, shrubs, buildings if possible
- Somewhere with easy water access
- Animal population - decide if you need to fence your garden to keep unwanted critters from eating your veggies.

Tip #3- Soil

- You should have well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter.
- Check to see if you need to add organic matter to your topsoil; be sure that approximately 25% of your top 8 inches of topsoil is organic matter.



Tip #4- Plant your Crops

- If you buy seedlings to transplant, be sure they look healthy and are not root bound.
- Preferably transplant on a cloudy day and water well.
- Handle plants carefully and make sure there is enough room between each plant.

Tip #5- Taking Care

- Water around the base of your plants.
Shallow watering is good for newly planted seeds (not mature plants)
- Water in the morning when possible.
- Control weeds- organic mulch and hand pulling are good techniques.



Harvest and Enjoy!!



Note: Maryland Cooperative Extension offers home and garden information, tips publications, plant problems, Bay issues, and other links at www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/index.cfm. For their Home and Garden Information website, visit <http://extension.umd.edu/learn/ask-gardening>. Or visit the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture, [Grow It - Eat It Food Network](#)

Vegetable Gardening Classes and Events

Would you like to take a gardening class, visit a demonstration garden, or 'talk veggies' with a Master Gardener?

University of Maryland Master Gardener programs throughout the state teach classes and workshops that are open to all interested residents. Class location, length, and size vary by county. You do not have to take the class in the county where you live.

Master Gardeners are also teaching and promoting food gardening at public events, such as fairs, festivals, and plant clinics. For more information on classes and events contact one of the coordinators listed on the following website: <http://growit.umd.edu/ClassesAndEvents/index.cfm>

Backyard Wildlife Fun for Kids - Soil Wildlife



**What kinds of critters are living
right beneath your feet?
Let's find out!**

What you need:

Trowel | Plate or shallow container | Magnifying glass | Notebook | Pen or pencil

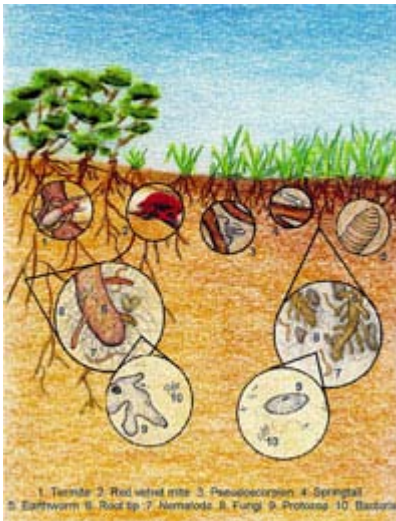


Step 1: Go outdoors and start digging around under large shrubs where leaves have fallen with your trowel (get permission if needed).

Brush aside the top layer of and dig up some of the partially decayed leaves and soil underneath them.

Step 2: Spread your sample out on your plate or shallow container.

Look closely using a magnifying glass and record what you see.



Click on Image above
to see a Larger Picture

What you might see:

- Earthworms- they have segmented bodies.
- Beetles- six legs (short) with a hard, shiny thick body
- Grubs- worm-like but has many stumpy legs
- Springtails- tiny, pale, wingless insects (white or gray)
- Spiders- eight legs (not all spiders make webs)
- Mites- have 8 legs (like spiders) but are round-bodied
- Centipedes- one pair of legs per segment; they can bite (they're predators)
- Millipedes- two pair of legs per segment (shorter legs than centipedes). They do not bite.



Did you know?

Beetles, earthworms, springtails and millipedes feed on dead plant material. Centipedes and spiders are predators.

Dig Deeper and Take an "Incredible Journey into the Soil"

[Just For Kids: Soil Biological Communities](#)

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If you enjoyed this issue of Habichat, you might want to check out our [Online Habichat Archive](#) and the [List of Habichat Articles](#) by Topic.

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- Photo of raised garden beds, courtesy of University of Maryland, College of Agriculture
- Centipede in soil, I-Stock Photo
- Illustrations of what lives in the soil, courtesy of Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Boys finding earthworm while digging in the soil, I-Stock Photo

We want to hear from you!

Letters, e-mail, photos, drawings. Let us know how successful you are as you create wildlife habitat on your property.

Write to Me!

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