


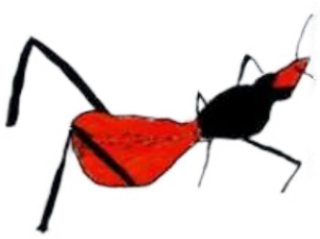

The Bugs That Bugged The Bugs

Written by Dianne Sunda





An adventure story that captures children's artwork to portray the cleverness of the winged creatures: bugs and birds!

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S
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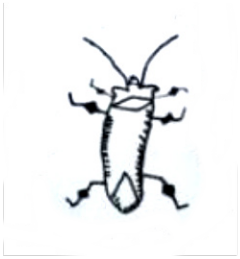


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The Bugs That Bugged The Bugs

The **Bugs that Bugged the Bugs** were true bugs among the most ancient insects; they first appeared 250 million years ago during the Golden Age of insect evolution. Many kinds left their fossils in the ancient shale. It was during this time, too, that the ancient reptiles appeared!

The life stories of bugs vary, but in most kinds their development is simple; that is, the young closely resemble the adults. Most bugs have wings, but there are exceptions. Their story is far older than that of warm blooded animals and birds. With their ancient lineage and their most unusual habits, their spy skills in this story are most unusual. With such ancestry and unusual skills the bugs at Painshill Park were true spies, observing activities, watching movements, reporting the results through careful observation, exploring secretly and discovering new plants and trees in the Park!

They lived among the plants and moved freely from plant to plant during an age of elegance (1720-1820). No period in history of gardening was so complex as landscaping styles were changing. The **Bugs** were witnesses to a landscape style, which has its relevance in garden and park legends.

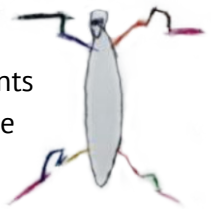
In the year 1748, the 10th year of The Hon. Charles Hamilton's landscapes at Painshill Park, the **Spy Bugs** discovered through correspondence between the first American born plant collector, John Bartram, and The Hon. Charles Hamilton that a five guinea box of mysterious seeds were on their way! Not even the head gardener at Painshill knew what plants, what growths and what blooms would emerge! It was, for the spy bugs, a perfect mystery in the perfectly picturesque Park.

Indeed, an arrival of unknown mystery seeds for a Park of such fine plants and wide range tree planting was a unique and important mystery for the bug spies to solve, urgently. They soon discovered that John Bartram was sending, by sea to other English subscribers, boxes of seeds collected in The Wilds of eastern North America. Of paramount importance, a plan of action needed to be devised, urgently, to protect the 160 acres of the Hamilton Landscapes, enriched by the buildings and waters, trees and shrubberies that help define the elements of surprise in each elegant and natural setting. Any day now, the unnamed seeds in boxes would arrive! These lifeless seeds would turn into new, green plants and grow! What would they become; how would they compare to the already established and beautiful plants? What shapes and colours would they become? The spies instinctively knew that seeds from the Wild would be soon supported by nature and the Park, an English landscape, could lose its original form, perhaps! Could they adapt to a range of habitats; would they encourage pollinating insects; would they reproduce and adapt to colonise new areas? It was the perfect mystery and national cause to solve!

The **Water Striker Bug** chaired the planning  meeting at a perfect tree meeting place. He reminded the bug agents that history would disclose much information about the behaviour of seeds. In ancient Greek and Roman times, olives, date palms, cabbages, turnips, lettuces and herbs were grown from seeds. The Greeks soaked seeds in milk or honey to speed up germination! "Heavens", said the **Squash Bug** agent.

The **Leaf Legged Bug** reminded the planning committee of agents that Heroes of the Enlightenment are emerging around the globe. One such hero is Benjamin Franklin, who is researching electricity in America. I learned this from an American cousin, named Agent **Lightening Bug! "Lightening Bug",** said the bug agents, in great belief!

The **Pied Shield Bug** was very focused to devise a perfect plan and added: Once the seeds have matured, they would compete for water, nutrients and light. They will not be in their natural land where the plants would have developed various strategies to ensure their seeds are dispersed far and wide. There, the seed pods would open explosively to fling the seed or to catch the wind! Plants often have fleshy fruits to tempt animals!



The **Green Shield Bug** agent added that  seeds bring the added reward of aroma, beauty, food and colour, which attracts pollinators such as the bee! Ripe pollen sticks to the bee and is carried to another flower.

"Are these seeds going to be water proofed?" added the **Common Pond Skater**. All the agents chanted in unison "We must think of all possibilities, but what will they be? How will we know where they should be planted and what will they become to serve the Park!"

The **Buffalo Treehopper** agent disclosed that he had learned from a cousin bug of the same name in the colonies that nearly all the seeds either die or become dormant if sown too deeply, because they cannot recognise when the surface light is sufficient for growth. As a rule of the land, seeds are best covered to no more than their own depth!

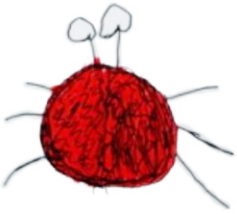
The **Common Froghopper** blurted out his concern; "What happens if they are buried in a box, travelling across the sea!". The **Common Flower Bug** retorted "Such a question inspires us to find out what they are, so we may observe and care for the seeds in the best way possible". The **Scorpion Bug** agent quickly expressed his concern that we know that seeds are obviously designed to grow in the wild, but on cultivation they will need help. "Then let us find them, firstly, and identify them, importantly" said the **Red and Black Assassin Bug**. "But, how could we achieve this?"

The **Forest Bug** proposed a very logical plan to meet the unusual challenge…

"We should summon our allies, the song birds! Their calls are a delight to the ear. We will include the most famous songster, the **Nightingale**. It is an astonishing singer, with a remarkable ability to combine power with melody. It can sing to relate secret messages, both by day and night and, on a still night, you can easily hear one singing at a range of a mile!

The **Green Leafhopper** suggested that, with the inclusion of the other birds, the sky could be lined to the sea to watch for the ship which carries the seeds to our land. "What a perfectly brilliant plan", said agent **Ant Lion** of the **Lacewing** order! **The Common Froghopper** supported the plan and mentioned that the **Blackbird** should not be left out. The richness of its notes and the clarity of the fluting will deliver the final message and secret code of discovery, perfectly.

"Well constructed plan", said the **Cicada**, the noisy insect agent! "May I also recommend our bird friend, agent **Night Star**, the **Wood Lark**. Even though he is somewhat plain, he will also work under the stars on the darkest of nights! Working and discovering in all light conditions is so crucial. The **Blackcap** can use mimicry as a timely decoy and the purring **Turtle Dove (Nightjar)** will prove to be a persistent player. **Nightjars** can perform a single burst of song – coded messages to continue unbroken for many minutes" said the Bug Agent, **Common Backswimmer**, as he swam on his back in the neighbouring lake area.



The plan was set to motion, high above the settled clouds in the sky, forming a chain through the air as all the bird allies formed a lined network to the coast. The exquisite messages carried codes back to the agent bugs. The ship had arrived and the seeds were now being transported by land to Painshill Park. When the song birds were congratulated for their brilliant message-code link, their songs of appreciation were interspersed with cheerful squawks and rasping sounds, all in unison to complete their important part of the spies mission.

The **Fire Bug** agent, which feeds mainly on seeds, exclaimed "As the seeds are now on their way to my woods, how do we learn their names, so that we may extend our welcome in a well-mannered way!"

"May I contribute a plan to solve this part of the mystery", said the **Forest Bug**. "As I live on a wide range of trees I should climb the tallest on our land and organise a look out position. Hopefully, my careful observation will generate a strategy which will divulge their identities." The **European Tortoise Bug** and the **Bishop's Mitre** volunteered to assist and they followed the **Forest Bug** to the top of the Cypress Tree, which is quite possibly the tallest in Europe, to meet the reassuring sky and welcoming for yet another successful mission to confirm the arrival of the mystery box of seeds.