

Insect Lore

Growing
Butterflies
Since 1969



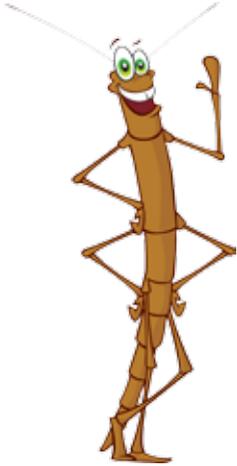
Instruction guide



Living Twigs, Walking Sticks... Stick Insects!

These remarkable insects are so camouflaged that even when you know they're there, they're difficult to find. Imagine how easy they are to miss when not looking for them.

In addition to their camouflaged bodies, they even sway, mimicking a leaf blowing in the breeze.



Your Living Twig kit includes:

- Reusable, washable Living Twig habitat with super clear mesh for easy viewing
- This wonderful instruction guide
- Stick Insect Eggs Voucher to redeem for real live Indian Stick Insect Eggs
- Paintbrush to make the transfer of little sticks to fresh leaves easier

Getting Started

Visit us at InsectLore.co.uk to redeem your Stick Insect Eggs Voucher. You will usually receive your stick insect eggs within one or two weeks, unless you specify another date.

We cannot guarantee precise hatch dates - and your eggs could hatch anytime up to two months after you receive them.



There are more than 2500 species of stick insects in the world. The stick insects you will be raising are known by the Latin or scientific name of *Carausius morosus*. This species comes from the Shambaganur region of Southern India. This explains its more commonly used name of the 'Indian' stick insect. They are believed to have been kept in captivity in Europe since the late 1800s.

Hatching Your Eggs

Your eggs will arrive packed in a small tube. Your eggs are from captive stock and have not been collected from the wild.



As camouflage is key with stick insects, it even begins with the eggs. They are round, brown with a yellow nodule and look very much like brown seeds. Although they may look like seeds, they are certainly more fragile! To avoid risk of illness, eggs and stick insects must not be eaten.

Carefully open the tube. Place the habitat on a level surface where it can be kept at normal room temperature. Place a piece of kitchen roll in the bottom of the habitat and carefully place the eggs on to it.

This allows the easy removal and cleaning of the insects' waste.

Never keep your eggs, or insects, in direct sunlight, as the heat from the concentrated sun could kill them.

You must monitor the eggs very carefully. Check them daily, looking closely for the first insect to emerge.

The first 'hatchling' or 'nymph' should appear within a few weeks of the hatch date that came with the eggs. When they hatch, the nymphs will be tiny, no more than 10mm long. Although, these baby stick insects are tiny, it's mind boggling to imagine they hatched out of an egg so very much smaller!

You will need to examine the inside of your habitat with great care to be sure that you spot them. On the day that the first one emerges you will need to start feeding them.



Feeding Your Stick Insects

To make the feeding of your stick insects relatively easy, place a potted ivy plant into their habitat, keeping it routinely watered. If you are unsure whether the plant has been treated with insecticide, wash off the leaves before placing it in your habitat.

Replace the plant when your stick insects have eaten the majority of the plant.

Alternatively, find some clean fresh leaves of Ivy, Privet or Bramble and cut three or four stems about 200 mm long. Be sure to collect them from a location where they will not have been sprayed with insecticides and avoid roadside plants.

Other food plants you may wish to use are Raspberry, Pyracantha, Rose and Hawthorn, or even the green part of Romane lettuce if the other food sources are scarce.

Choose your food type carefully and bear in mind that the stick insects do not like change. Once they begin eating a type of plant, it is unlikely they will accept a change.

To keep the leaves fresh, wrap the base of the stems in damp cotton wool or tissue paper and place them in a container such as an old yoghurt pot or wrap the stems and tissue with a small plastic bag and secure with a rubber band.

Do not use an open container with water in it as your insects could fall in and drown. To keep the stems fresh, you may prefer to use the oasis material that florists use. You can find this stiff spongy material at any florist supply or craft/hobby store or garden centre.

Once the food is introduced to the habitat, your insects will soon start to feed on the leaves.

Once or twice a week replace the old food with fresh stems, if not using a potted plant. Be very careful to transfer all the insects to the new food plants before you throw away the old ones.

While they are little, you may find it easier to transfer them with the paintbrush provided.

Your insects will gain much of their moisture from the leaves they eat, but they like to drink too. To give them the opportunity to drink you should very slightly dampen the food plant leaves once a week. This is best done with a very fine mist from a small plant sprayer, being careful not to get the plants or insects too wet. A few tiny droplets of water on the leaves is all that is required.

Never use a sprayer that has previously contained garden chemicals, as this may kill your insects.

Insect Growth

Your stick insects should grow quickly from 10mm when they first hatch to around 100mm at six months.



To accommodate this rapid growth they will shed their skins several times as they grow. Like all insects, stick insects have no internal skeleton, their strength being in their hard outer body parts.

Each time they shed their skin, they will hang from a plant stem or the habitat to harden off their new exoskeleton. At this stage they will be weaker than normal and you should avoid disturbing them for 24 hours.

Your nymphs will moult six times and may take four to seven months to mature.

What Are Those Brown Balls?

Your stick insects will drop their waste, which inconveniently looks like their eggs. Place a piece of kitchen roll on the bottom of your habitat. This will make cleaning easier.

When you can see brown balls on the paper, it's time to exchange the soiled kitchen roll for a clean sheet. Remove the soiled paper carefully, being mindful of not spilling out the contents into the habitat. You may find it easier to fold it in quarters before removing it from the habitat. Place a clean sheet into the habitat.

Before disposing the soiled kitchen roll from your habitat, examine the contents. If your stick insects have grown to be adults, some of the waste may be mixed in with stick insect eggs. The eggs are smooth, roundish brown balls with a yellow nodule on one end. The waste is darker, more rough and square balls, no nodule on the end.

Please do not throw the eggs into the bin. To separate the eggs from the waste, you may find it easier to tip the contents into a disposable cup. The waste should float and the eggs should sink. Dispose of the waste and wash your hands afterwards!

Please see "Life Expectancy" section for the next step for your eggs.

Handling the Insects

Indian stick insects are harmless and can be safely handled; but, they are delicate and need to be handled carefully to avoid harming them. Young insects are most vulnerable and should only be moved whilst on their food plants. Older insects can be encouraged to walk on to your hand by gently touching their 'tail.'

Be careful when handling them, as they are delicate. If you grasp them by their legs, the legs can fall off, and that can't feel great. Ouch! If this does happen, sometimes a young stick insect may grow a smaller version of the limb (a process called regeneration). This smaller limb is usually less useful than the original, so please be very careful when handling your stick insects.

Life Expectancy

Your insects should be mature at about six months old and should live for around a year.

Each female can fertilise her own eggs - no males required. Once mature they will start to lay eggs of their own that, kept at room temperature, should hatch 3-5 months after they were laid. These will give you the chance to raise a new generation if you wish!

Please be aware: one female can lay several hundred fertile eggs in her lifetime of several months.

If you do not wish to raise a multitude of stick insects and have run out of friends who want one, we suggest putting the eggs in the freezer for a week to prevent them from hatching.

Never release your Indian Stick Insects into the wild. Although they have lived in Europe for over 200 years, they are still considered a non-native species and thus could be harmful to our ecosystem.

Anatomy



Like all insects, these living walking sticks have a three-part body (head, thorax and abdomen), 6 jointed legs, 2 pairs of wings, and 2 antennae. Their body is covered with a hard exoskeleton. They breathe through a series of holes called spiracles, which are located along the sides of the body. Their body is long (up to 8cm for females, 6cm for males) and thin (with a diameter of about 5mm).

Some Stick Insects Facts

Only around one in one thousand Indian stick insects is a male (and many of the few males are sterile). This species is parthenogenetic, which means the females are able to lay fertile eggs without mating.

Indian Stick insects have the ability to slightly change their colour. At night time they can become slightly darker than by day, helping them to blend in even better with their surroundings.

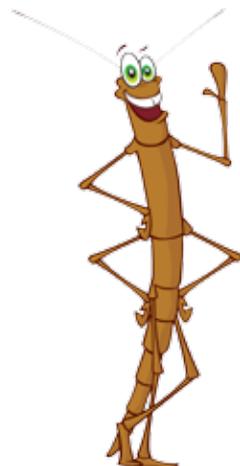
Occasionally you may see your insects swaying from side to side. This is another camouflage trick. They are trying to mimic branches swaying in the wind.

Stick Insects have a combination of suckers and claws on their feet, allowing them to walk up vertical surfaces and even upside down.

Like all insects, they have six legs. These legs consist of four segments: coxa (connected to the body), trochantero-femur, tibia and tarsus (equipped with suckers and hooks). In adult females the inside base of the forelegs are bright red.

When this species is held it will often fold all of its legs into itself making it truly resemble a stick!

When disturbed, the nymphs and adults may emit a fluid from the mouthparts. They may, however, simply drop to the ground, mimicking a twig, and remaining motionless for hours on end.





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