

Classifying Garden Creatures

Using a
Dichotomous Key





We can find out the identity of organisms in the natural world such as animals, trees and plants using a dichotomous key.

Each step of the key gives the user choices to follow that eventually lead to the correct answer.

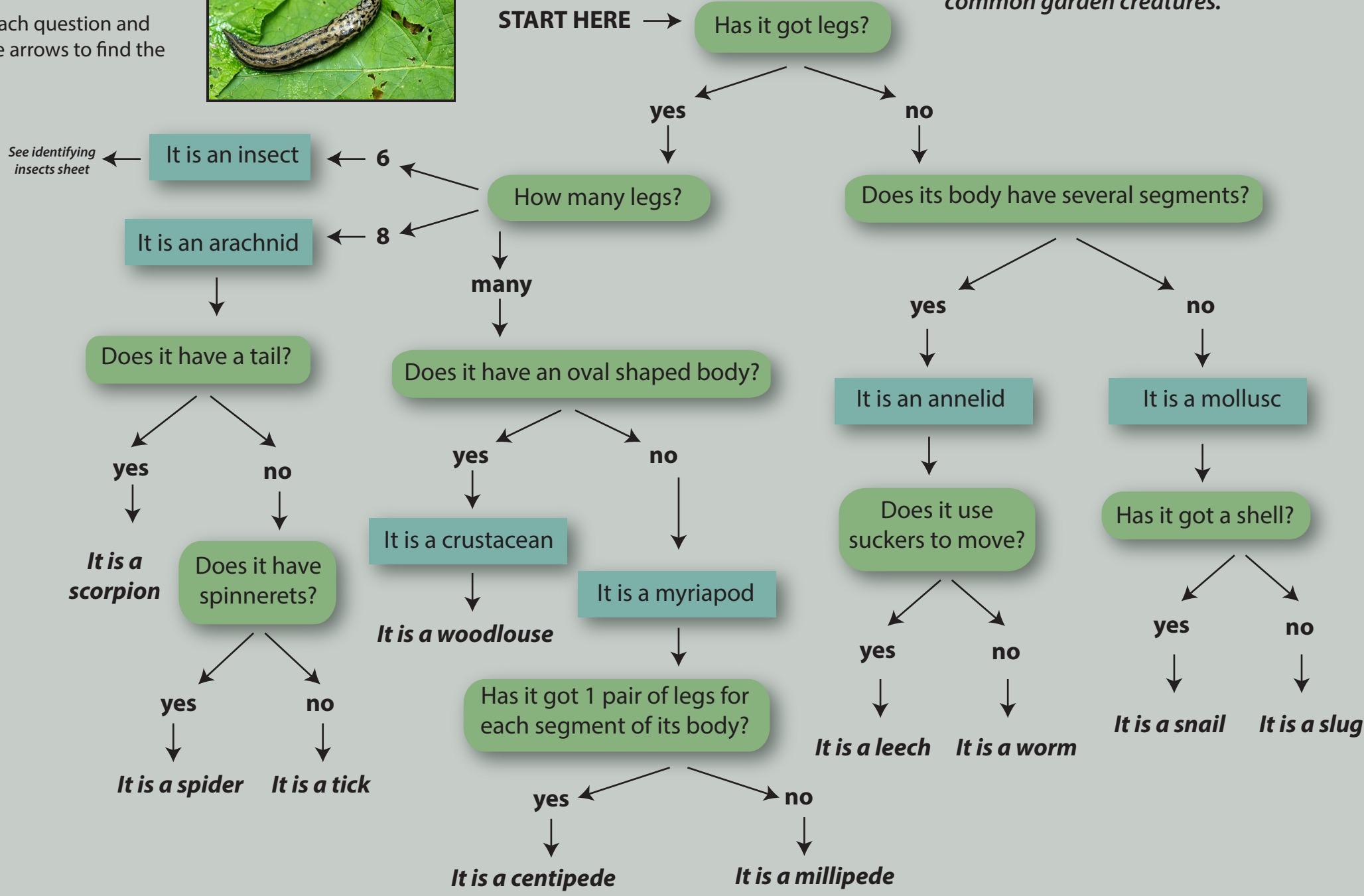
'Dichotomous' means divided or two parts.

What is this creature called and how is it classified?

Answer each question and follow the arrows to find the answer.



Here is a simplified dichotomous key to help you discover the identity of some common garden creatures.



*Some dichotomous keys are written in the form of questions.
Use this key to work out the identity of creatures with six legs- insects.*

1) Does it have visible wings?

Yes - Go to Question 2 No - Go to Question 3

2) How many pairs of wings?

1 pair - Diptera (Flies, Mosquitoes) 2 pairs - Go to question 7

3) Does it have a large hip joint and a flat body?

Yes - Siphonaptera (Flea) No - Go to question 4

4) Does it have three or more tails at the end of the abdomen?

Yes - Thysanura (Silverfish) No - Go to question 5

5) Does it have a thin waist and bent antennae?

Yes - Hymenoptera (Ant) No - Go to Question 6

6) Is its body shaped like a stick?

Yes - Phasmatodea (Stick Insect) No - Go to Question 7

7) Does it have a hidden pair of wings?

Yes - Go to Question 8 No - Go to Question 15

8) Does it have a set of hard outer wings ?

Yes - Go to question 9 No - Go to question 10

9) Does it have pinchers on its abdomen?

Yes - Dermaptera (Earwigs) No - Coleoptera (Beetles)

10) Is the body oval and flattened?

Yes - Blattodea (Cockroaches) No - Go to question 11

11) Does it have long hind legs used for jumping?

Yes - Go to question 12 No - Go to question 15

12) Does it have a flat sided head?

Yes - Orthoptera (Grasshoppers, crickets) No - Go to question 13

13) Does it have an extremely long neck region?

Yes - Go to question 14 No - Go to question 15

14) Does it hold its forelegs in a 'praying' position ?

Yes - Mantids (Praying Mantis) No - Raphidioptera (Snakefly)

15) Are both sets of wings about the same size?

Yes - Go to question 16 No - Go to question 18

16) Are its wings membranous?

Yes - Go to question 17 No - Go to question 19

17) Does it have compound eyes that take up almost all of its head?

Yes - Odonata (Dragonflies) No - Go to question 18

18) Are the forewings membranous and hardened at the base?

Yes - Hemiptera (Cicadas, aphids, true bugs) No - Go to question 19

19) Are the wings covered in scales?

Yes - Lepidoptera (Butterflies, moths) No - Go to question 20

20) Does it have an oval shaped abdomen and a thin waist?

Yes - Hymenoptera (Bees, wasps) No - Embioptera (Web spinners)