

THE BERLESE METHOD OF COLLECTING SMALL INSECTS  
AND OTHER ANIMALS FROM LEAFMOLD, SOIL, MOSS, OR  
OTHER SIMILAR MATERIALS

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The apparatus consists essentially of a funnel supported in an upright position with a shallow fine mesh screen-bottomed tray, at the top, to hold the sample of leafmold, and so forth, within the rim of the funnel, and a homeopathic vial half-full of preserving fluid attached (outside) to the neck of the funnel, below, to catch the insect and other specimens that fall out of the sample.

The material such as leafmold is dried by the gentle application of heat from above. If direct sunshine is insufficient, or the humidity too high, or the material is to continue overnight, as is usual, a small light bulb (25 or 30 watt) under a conical shade is used to direct heat onto the top of the sample.

The screen on which the sample is spread in a layer one or two inches thick should be about 20 mesh to the inch. The inside of the funnel and neck must be smooth inside, so that the specimens falling onto the steep slope will not catch anywhere on projections, but end up in or on the preserving fluid in the vial.

Many of the small insects, mites, and so forth, so collected, may be floating on the 70% alcohol used as a preservative. A drop or two of ether, added when the vial containing specimens is removed from the apparatus to be labelled and stoppered, will readily permit the floating specimens to sink into the fluid, so they will not be lost or destroyed around the cork or stopper. After labelling the vials completely, they are set aside, all sorting of specimens being done in the home laboratory.