



ARTHROPODS

Arthropods are invertebrates (i.e. they have a hard external covering called an exoskeleton instead of a backbone). They get their name from their jointed (arthros) legs (podos).

Arthropods range in size from microscopic to several inches in length. They include insects such as springtails, beetles, and ants; arachnids such as spiders and mites; myriapods such as centipedes and millipedes; and scorpions. Crabs and other crustaceans are also arthropods.



David Walter

Based on their functions in soil, arthropods can be grouped as shredders, predators herbivores or fungal-feeders (see mites, **left**). Most soil-dwelling arthropods eat fungi, worms or other arthropods.

This springtail (*Collembola*), **below-right**, is a fungal-feeding arthropod that lives in the surface layer of natural and agricultural soil throughout the world while millipedes, **below-left**, are shredders, chewing up dead plant matter



Joseph Calvo



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As they feed, arthropods aerate and mix the soil, regulate the population size of other soil organisms and shred organic material.