

Science/Environment/Compost

Teacher's Note: Please be aware that the term “worm poop” appears in the text of this file as a definition of “worm castings” or as a term in the production of compost. In the composting and organic gardening industry the acceptable term for worm waste is “worm poop” or “worm castings.” Please see the links below for further explanation.

<http://www.wormpoop.com/>

<http://www.terracycle.net/>

<http://www.cleairgardening.com/organic-wormcastings.html>

Glossary of Composting Terms

Aerate - provide oxygen

Aerobic - requiring air or oxygen

Anerobic - without air or oxygen

Bacteria - single celled organisms

Biodegradable - items that can be broken down by microorganisms, oxygen, heat and moisture

Brown materials - high in carbon; provide source of energy for microorganisms in compost (leaves, sawdust, hay or straw)

Carbon - energy source (brown materials)

Composting - decay of plants and other once-living materials into an earthy, dark, crumbly substance

Compost tea - made from compost that is left in water and given oxygen; found to increase the benefits of compost

Decay - to breakdown or rot

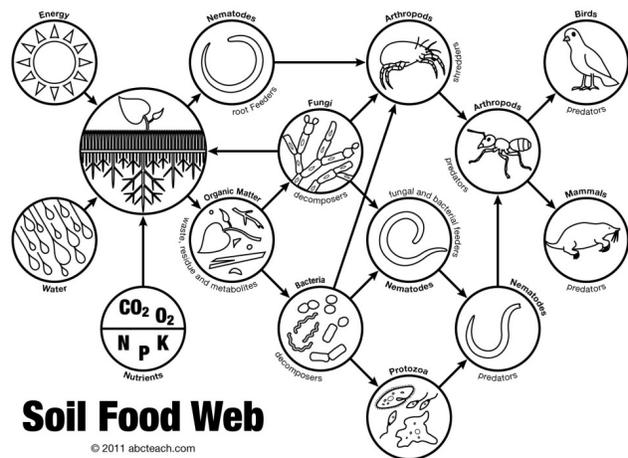
Decompose - breakdown of non-living organic materials

Endophytes - a fungi or bacteria that live in plants without harming them; it is believed to be a healthy symbiotic relationship for them both

Fertilizer - materials/substances that supply nutrients to plants

Fungi - mushrooms, molds, yeast; all of which are found throughout the decaying process

Green Materials - high in nitrogen; vital to the decaying process of composting; helps microbes speed decomposition (fresh grass clippings, vegetable peels,



Science/Environment/Compost

coffee grounds, manure from horses, cows, rabbits, sheep. NOT from humans, cats, dogs)

Humus - nutrient packed, finished compost

Inorganic Materials - materials that are not either plant or animal

Landfill - a location that human created trash/waste is disposed of

Manure - organic matter used as a fertilizer

Microbes - tiny organisms

Microorganism - tiny organisms that can only be seen by microscope (includes bacteria and virus)

Mulch - layer that provides protection for soil (helps retain moisture, reduce erosion, provides limited nutrition)

Nematodes - roundworms

Nitrogen - protein source (green materials)

Nutrients – needed in the soil to grow healthy plants. Compost helps soil retain water and nutrients; compost also creates nutrients that enrich the soil

Organic - anything created by or from living organisms

Oxygen - valuable element in the composting process; oxygen is needed by the microbes found in compost to survive and thrive

pH – a measurement of alkaline and acidic levels. Organisms found in compost work best under neutral to acidic conditions; ideally a pH between 5.5 and 8

Proteins - molecules

Recycle - processing of waste (trash) and making it into something useful

Reduce - producing and using fewer items that are made new, not recycled, materials

Worm Castings - worm poop (rich in plant nutrients)