
Let's Make a Compost Cake

Description

Students build a compost pile.

Objective

To experience the process of decomposition and the nutrient cycle.



Teacher Background

See detailed description of composting, p. 196. Be sure students wash hands well when done with this activity.

Materials

Compost materials
Shovels and spading forks
Wheelbarrow
Water access and hose with fan spray nozzle
Meter stick
Soil thermometer
Life Lab journals

Preparation

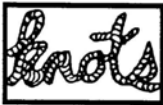
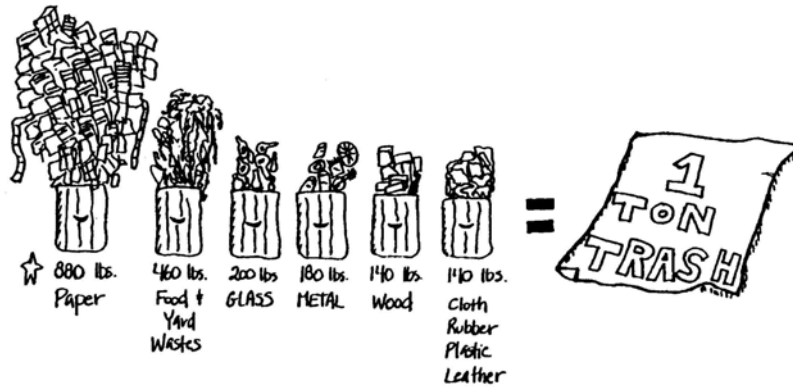
1. Select a permanent compost area for the garden. The ideal location is close to the garden for easy hauling as well as easy access.
2. Collect composting materials.



What types of materials decompose? (materials that have been alive) Why is it important for these materials to decompose? (they become nutrients for other plants) Is this a cycle? What are the parts of this cycle? (living plant or animal grows, dies, decomposes, provides nutrients for another living plant or animal to grow) What is the cycle called? (nutrient cycle) Do you think we can create a nutrient cycle in our garden? (Record predictions.)



1. Demonstrate building a miniature compost cake with samples of carbon, nitrogen, and soil prior to building the actual pile. Discuss the different ingredients that can be used in the pile. Stress the importance of the size, ingredients, and moisture level.



Where does all that garbage go? What kinds of problems does garbage make? How could more recycling make a difference? Where is the dump site in our city? Are we running out of room? How does it feel to throw things away? How does it feel to recycle?



1. Set up a recycling system in your classroom. Set up a give-away box for discarded but still useable things. Set up another box for extra snack and lunch foods. Set up a paper recycle bin and find out where you can recycle it locally.
2. Invite a speaker to class who is involved in recycling in your community.

