

Why Compost

Read the following passage. Answer the analysis questions that follow.

Why Compost?

What IS Compost?

Compost forms naturally nearly everywhere! Leaves drop from trees. Grass clippings are left after mowing the lawn. Plants and animals die. Over time, these organic materials break down or decompose. The rich, dark-brown, crumbly, soil-like material that results is called compost.

At home or at your school, compost can be made out of leaves, grass clippings, vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, wood chips, straw and small twigs.

Tiny living things do much of the work of breaking down organic materials to form compost. These tiny workers are called microorganisms and include such things as bacteria and fungi. Animals living in the soil help microorganisms break down organic materials. Worms and pill bugs are examples of organisms that help change organic waste into compost.

As microorganisms and soil critters turn organic materials into compost, they use these materials as food. The organic materials provide many of the nutrients that plants need for growth and activity. Eventually, these nutrients are returned to the soil, to be used again by trees, grass, and other plants. This is nature's way of composting and recycling!

The compost that you make at your home or school can be used as mulch or mixed into the soil. Compost is one of nature's best mulches and soil amendments. By composting and mulching, you can save money by reducing your fertilizer and landscaping bills, lowering your water bill, and spending less on trash pickups or disposal.

Analysis Questions

1. Write a definition for compost.
2. Explain where, in a natural food chain, does composting occur?
3. Why do we need composting to occur?
4. What are the benefits of man-made composting?