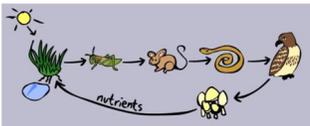


Composting Critters

Nature has an amazing way of recycling!

Decomposers eat dead plants and animals. Common decomposers are mushrooms, worms, snails, and pill bugs. They are the Earth's clean-up crew. When decomposers eat, they break down food and return organic nutrients to the ecosystem. They provide nature's vitamins.

Decomposers' Role in the Food Web



Check out this [video](#) for a more in-depth look at decomposers.

Recycle your food scraps

Harness the power of decomposers at home, reduce the amount of trash sent to the landfill and create soil for your flower or veggie garden.

Composting speeds up the natural process of decay to produce vitamin-rich soil. With the help of worms, you can make that process even faster. Composting is simple: save your food scraps while cooking, add the scraps to your bin or pile.

How to Compost at Home

- Decide what will work best for you:
 - Indoor: small worm bins
 - Outdoor: more traditional compost pile
- Learn what you can and can't compost.
- Let the decomposers go to work.
- Low upkeep including:
 - Keep it moist
 - Occasionally stir

Brown materials (2 parts)	Green materials (1 part)	DO NOT COMPOST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry leaves Twigs less than 1/4" in diameter Shredded newspaper Straw Shredded household cardboard: egg cartons, paper towel and toilet paper rolls Sawdust (if enough extra green material is added) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green leaves Grass clippings* Weeds (before they have gone to seed) Leftover plants at the end of the season Coffee grounds Fruit and vegetable scraps Eggshells Manure (cow, horse, or poultry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat Bones Grease Whole eggs Dairy products Diseased or insect-infested plants Pet waste Persistent perennial weeds such as yellow nutsedge, Canada thistle, quackgrass Wood ash[†] Black walnut leaves[‡]

For more information on how to start a successful compost in your yard visit the [EPA website](#).

Go Outside

Decomposers are everywhere. Head into your backyard or local park. Turn over a large rock or log. Move a potted plant. Investigate a tree stump.



How many different decomposers can you find?



Pill Bug vs. Sow Bug



There are two types of land crustaceans and they look very similar but gently touch them and it is easy to tell them apart. If it curls into a ball giving it the familiar name "roly-poly," it is a pill bug. If it cannot roll into a ball and has two small tail-like parts, then it is a sow bug.

Take a photo of the decomposers you find and share on Facebook and Instagram using these hashtags:

#casbacktonature #casnatureplay

Gross, Bugs!

Many adults do not like creepy crawly creatures, but children love them.

Encourage your children to GENTLY pick up worms.



Let them GENTLY touch pill bugs.

Encourage them to appreciate them by reading this fun [story](#) about a worm.

