



Theme: Plants (Grades 3-5)

Post-Visit Activity #1 Chomp! Chomp!

Overview:

Students will create their own worm compost bin in the classroom for their recess and lunch scraps.

Objectives:

- Students will learn about conservation, recycling and their environment.
- Students will understand their waste does not have to go in into our landfills.
- Students will observe the cycle of nature.
- Students will understand how they can help their environment.
- Students will observe how worms help break down scraps.

Materials:

- Five-gallon container with a lid
- Drill
- Dried leaves
- Potting soil
- Spray bottle
- Shredded newspaper
- List of what you can and cannot compost – to be taped to the box
- Worms (red worms, also known as red wigglers, are great for compost bins)

Pre-Activity for Teacher:

1. Purchase a storage bin with a lid on it.
2. Drill holes along the sides and bottom – not too big as you do not want anything to fall out. The holes make sure that the compost gets the air it needs.
3. Fill the bottom inch of the container with a small amount of potting soil, dried leaves and sand.
4. Mist the bottom layer with your spray bottle.
5. Purchase worms.

Activity:

1. With the students, brainstorm ideas in which they can help the environment.

2. Describe to them what composting is: *Composting is the process of turning food scraps into rich soil. Vermicomposting, or composting with worms, is one way to convert food scraps into soil. Since food scraps have nutrients in them, those nutrients are in the soil once the composting process is finished. When finished compost is added to soil, it acts like a natural fertilizer for plants.*
3. Inform the class that they will be creating a compost pile where worms will break down food scraps.
4. Bring out the bin. You may choose to have students decorate it.
5. Share with the students the materials that can and cannot be composted.
6. Inform the students that the class will compost their scraps from recess and lunch.
7. Divide the class into groups.
8. Assign one group to monitor the bin and stir it once a week carefully. Groups should rotate monitoring the compost bin.
9. If the compost seems dry, mist it.
10. If it is too damp, add shredded newspaper.
11. Approximately two months later, there should be soil to use in the garden or for a planting experiment.
12. Please note the worms will only leave an environment that they are not happy in. If you notice worms trying to leave the bin, make sure the compost is not too wet or too dry.

Discussion:

1. What happens to your waste when you throw it in the garbage?
2. Why is it better to compost our waste instead of throwing it in the garbage?
3. How does composting affect the size of our ecological footprint?
4. How do the worms help our environment?

Compost It!

Please Do

Bread, rice, pasta, beans
 Fruits
 Vegetables
 Eggshells
 Coffee grounds
 Tea bags
 Plant leaves, grass clippings
 Newspaper

Please Don't

Fat, oil, and grease
 Meat and bones
 Cheese
 Mayonnaise
 Milk
 Peanut butter
 Salad dressing
 Sour cream
 Eggs
 Pet waste

Suggested Reading:

1. ***Eddie's Garden*** by Sarah Garland. Eddie learns all of the things plants need in order to grow as he and his family create their own garden.
2. ***The Gardener*** by Sarah Stewart. In the middle of the Great Depression, little Lydia Grace finds happiness in a new home by gardening to create beauty.
3. ***Jack's Garden*** by Henry Cole. Readers get an up-close look at a garden and its inhabitants as it is planted and grown by Jack.
4. ***Ladybug at Orchard Avenue*** by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld. Readers follow a ladybug through a garden as it prepares for the cold winter ahead.
5. ***Miss Rumphius*** by Barbara Cooney. A woman discovers the splendor of plants and the wonders of seed travel while on a quest to make the world more beautiful.
6. ***A Packet of Seeds*** by Deborah Hopkinson. Annie's mother is upset about having to move away from their home, but finds comfort in creating a garden full of plants from home.
7. ***A Place to Grow*** by Soyung Pak. A father teaches his daughter about the importance of a proper environment, both for plants to grow, and people.
8. ***Plantzilla*** by Jerdine Nolen. Mortimer Henryson and his family learn about the importance of caring for a plant when Mortimer brings Plantzilla home from school.
9. ***Tops & Bottoms*** by Janet Stevens. A clever hare tricks a lazy bear out of his share of the harvest until the bear understands the value of hard work in the garden.
10. ***Weslandia*** by Paul Fleischman. A boy creates his own civilization entirely based on his garden with unusual plants.
11. ***Whose Garden Is It?*** by Mary Ann Hoberman. Mrs. McGee learns about the great amount of impact a garden and the plants within it have on many different creatures.