

Composting Activity

This week is our last Learning Together Tuesday, because the Garden is finally able to reopen to the public this Friday! For the occasion, we chose a composting activity, an activity that you can continue doing all summer long to keep your Garden beautiful and growing strong!



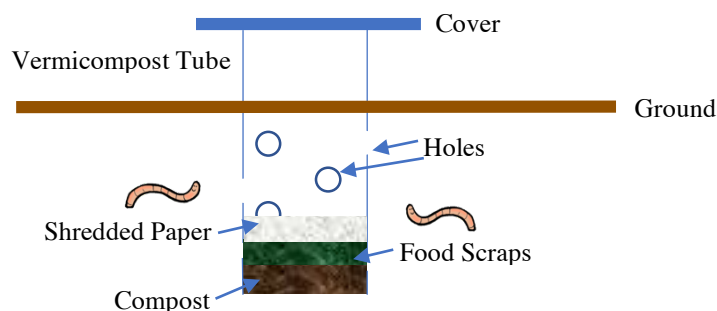
What is Compost?

Compost is organic matter that is decomposing or has decomposed. Once living things die, their bodies break down or decompose. This takes time, but eventually nutrients and minerals from these living things are returned to the soil. The compost we use in our gardens is plant material that has broken down. This break-down is caused by certain macro- and microorganisms.

Macroorganisms are those large enough to be seen with the naked eye, like worms, ants and beetles. **Microorganisms** are living things so small that a microscope is needed to be able to see them, like bacteria and fungi. All these **decomposers** work together to break down the plant material and make the nutrients and minerals in them available to plants again when they are added to the soil. When composting specifically with worms and microorganisms, we call it **vermicomposting**, because *vermis* means worm in Latin!

Activity

To help our gardens grow, we're going to make some vermicompost tubes! These tubes will have holes along the sides, and should be long enough to stick up about a foot from the ground. You can fill them with food scraps and shredded paper that worms will then help decompose into a great nutrient source for your garden!



Materials:

- ⊗ An approximately 2 foot-long tube open on both ends (you could use PVC pipe, a long plastic container, or even a cardboard tube)
- ⊗ Something to cover one end of the tube (pipe capping, or a flat piece of plastic like a plastic watering tray)
- ⊗ Something to make holes in the tube (a drill for PVC pipe or heavy plastics, scissors or a knife for thin plastics or cardboard)
- ⊗ Paint or stickers for decorating!

Method:

1. Drill or make holes along the sides of about a foot of your tube. These will be the entrances and exits for the worms, so make sure they are large enough in diameter for earthworms to crawl through!
2. Decorate the part of your tube without the holes. You can do this by painting it, or sticking stickers on it. Remember, this tube will live outside in your garden, so the rain may wash away some paints.
3. In your garden, dig a hole about a foot deep and as wide as your tube. Then put your tube into the hole with the side of the tube with the holes drilled in it down. **Remember, the tube must be open on both ends!**
4. Over time, add your food scraps and shredded paper/newspaper to the tube for worms to eat. The shredded paper is very important to make sure that the contents of your tube are not too wet for the worms. **There needs to be an equal balance of wet and dry, food scraps and shredded paper.** Every time you're finished adding food scraps and paper to your tube, place the pipe capping or flat piece of plastic over the open top end of your tube (you might need to place a rock on top to weigh down your cover).

What can you add to your vermicompost tube?

Add
Plant-based food scraps
Shredded paper/newspaper
Dried grass clippings

Do Not Add	Why?
Scraps with sauces or oils	Oil will slow or prevent decomposition
Meats/bones/fish/dairy	Smells will attract pests like rats
Acidic fruit scraps	Too much acidity can make worms sick

See You Soon!

We hope you have fun with our Learning Together Tuesday activities! Please keep in touch with us by [Facebook](#) or [email](#) and we hope to see you soon at the MUN Botanical Garden!