



Compost Outpost

Compost Outpost is a place where people of all ages can learn about the importance of soil. Discover why compost is not a dirty word!

Healthy soil supports life on Earth. Soil contains the nutrients plants need to grow. Healthy soil has air space. Plants help soil to stay where it is. That's why scientists are concerned about soil erosion and the loss of nutrients caused by plowing, clear-cutting of forests, and urban development.

Dig into this quiz to learn more about the importance of composting.

1. Where does soil come from?

- a) The auto mechanic
- b) A dog that needs a bath
- c) Decomposed organic matter (plants, animals and other formerly living things) and weathered rock.

ANSWER: c – Soil forms over time through the breakdown of rocks as well as leaves and other organic matter.

2. How many living things inhabit a teaspoon of soil?

- a) About 7 or 8
- b) More than 6 billion
- c) Almost 6,000

ANSWER: b – One teaspoon of soil can contain 6 billion microorganisms. That's the number of people on Earth!



3. Which of the following is true about soil?

- a) It's extremely important for food production.
- b) It has an argumentative attitude and spits dirt when it talks.
- c) It's as deep as the Earth is thick.

ANSWER: a – Healthy soil is essential for growing most of the food we eat – from corn to broccoli to strawberries.

4. Which are soil problems that are happening all over the world?

- a) Mudslides
- b) Dust storms
- c) Loss of growing potential of agricultural lands
- d) All of the above

ANSWER: d – When land loses topsoil faster than the soil can be replaced, land loses its fertility. Soil is constantly being moved by water, wind, and people. Changing land uses (such as clearing forested hillsides) cause the extreme versions of those actions – mudslides and dust storms.

5. How long does it take for an inch of topsoil to be created?




- a) Five hundred years
- b) Ten years
- c) One year




ANSWER: a – That's why it's important to protect our soils! Just think – 1 inch of topsoil has formed since Columbus!

6. Which of the following activities help stabilize soils?

- a) Using more pesticides to kill bugs
- b) Planting trees and ground cover on yards, vacant lots, hillsides, and streamside areas.

ANSWER: b – Plant roots do a terrific job of keeping soils in their place.

COMPOST OUTPOST	Tad O'Sense 	Ima Gardener 	Professor B.A. Composter 
What is compost?	"Compost is all the stuff for the garden that I didn't have to bag up and drag to the curb last summer."	"Compost is decomposed plants from last year's garden that have broken down to re-supply this year's garden with the elements plants need to thrive."	"Scientifically, compost is an organic product resulting from controlled biological decomposition of organic matter."
Where does compost come from?	"The compost bin behind the garage, of course."	"My compost tumbler! I throw all my garden waste—leaves, twigs, clippings, etc. -into the tumbler, instead of the trash!"	"Strictly speaking, anything organic-anything that was once alive-can become compost, but horticulturists prefer compost derived exclusively from the kingdom Plantae."
How is compost made?	"I just put leaves and grass clippings into the compost bin and...shazam!...we get finished compost a few months later."	"Easy as 1-2-3! I just chop up all my shrub and tree trimmings and put them in my compost tumblers. I might add a small amount of fertilizer, but other than that, the compost cooks all by itself."	"Compost is produced by the biological activity of aerobic microorganisms that utilize oxygen, moisture, and saprophytic nutrition in fecundaceous regeneration, resulting in the decomposition of organic matter. "

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Who needs compost?	"Composting saves me work, and it's pretty cool that I am doing my part to help preserve the world's resources, - you know, water, soil, landfill space, stuff like that."	"Me! You! Everybody! We all need compost to help our gardens grow and prosper. Compost helps us maintain a healthy balance of good critters in the soil so the bad critters won't take over. It also lets our soils breathe - which is important because plant roots need air!"	"Enlightened persons know every living thing relies upon decomposition. If dead things did not decay, we would be shoveling our way through a giant pile of everything that ever lived—from amoebas and giant trees to Tyrannosaurs and Woolly Mammoths!"
Why should I care about compost?	"The compost bin makes yard work faster, and spreading compost on the flowerbeds keeps the weeds down, so I can chill out instead of pulling weeds all day."	"Where do I start!? First of all, compost loosens my clay soil, so water soaks in faster. My soil doesn't wash away! My compost-enriched soil is more fertile. I even have fewer plant pests and diseases these days!"	"Mathematically, the cost to benefit ratio of incorporating compost into a horticultural regime is phenomenally advantageous. The horticulturist reaps the benefits of a biologically-enhanced environment with decreased exertion!"

Any way you look at it, composting is a great idea.