

Focus on: Decomposers

This lesson is meant to support the unit on Structures & Functions of Living Organisms. It can be done to generate background knowledge prior to teaching the unit, during the unit to reinforce lessons, or as a follow up to the unit to increase the retention of information. How you guide your students will depend on the information you have already taught and the information you want to introduce. Please remember that many gardens run on a yearly cycle and it will be easier to find more decomposers at the end of the growing season.

Clarifying Objectives:

5.L.1.1 Explain why some organisms are capable of surviving as a single cell while others require many cells that are specialized to survive.

5.L.2.2 Classify the organisms within an ecosystem according to the function they serve: producers, consumers, or decomposers (biotic factors)

5.L.2.3 Infer the effects that may result from the interconnected relationship of plants and animals to their ecosystem

Key Vocabulary:

Definitions can be found at <http://learnersdictionary.com>

- Organism
- cell
- Specialized
- Survive
- Ecosystem
- Function
- Producer
- Consumer
- Decomposer
- Biotic Factor
- Infer
- Interconnected Relationship

Focus Question(s):

Why are decomposers essential to a garden ecosystem?

Materials:

School Garden

Garden Gloves to wear while exploring the garden especially if touching plants, soil, lifting pots, etc.

Activities:

1. Review/Introduce the definition of a decomposer: an organism that gets its energy from breaking down decaying organic material; the role of decomposers is the recycling of nutrients throughout the ecosystem.
2. Brainstorm some common decomposers in a garden ecosystem –

Guiding Questions:

- What do decomposers do in the garden?
- Where can we find decomposers in the garden?
- If we removed all of the

snails, bess beetles, worms, slugs, millipedes, cockroaches, roly polies, etc.

3. Visit the school garden to locate animals that are decomposers.

4. Discuss the guiding questions.

5. Answer the Focus Question: Why are decomposers essential to a garden ecosystem? Answer: They break down dead and decaying garden plants (producers) and other garden animals (consumers) and help to turn them into soil which provides needed nutrients for new producers.

decomposers from the garden, what effect would that have on the garden ecosystem?