Name: _____ Date: _____

Composting: Nature's Recycling

Read the information below and highlight the important information. When you are done, answer the questions on the back of this page.

Did you know compost piles are amazing places? A compost pile takes advantage of nature's recycling system by turning organic waste into a rich soil conditioner called compost or humus. Grass cuttings, fallen leaves, insect and animal remains, or anything that once lived, will slowly decay over time and go back into the earth. This is called decomposition. Composting allows you to see decomposition in action!

Deep inside the compost pile there is a workforce of bacteria, fungi and other organisms like earthworms that work to breakdown or decompose organic waste. Earthworms help the process of composting by eating the earth materials. The eaten materials pass through the earthworm's body creating waste called castings. Castings add nutrients to the compost. Compost is a dark, loose, soil-like substance or humus that can be used to improve the quality of soil for growing.

Waste found in the kitchen, such as fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grinds, bread, and even eggshells, are good for composting materials. Waste found outside, such as lawn clippings, flowers, bits of other plants and twigs, can also be added. Even torn up newspapers and hair clippings can be composted.

Unfortunately not all materials can be used for composting. Materials such as meat, fish and bones are smelly and will attract rodents like mice and rats. Therefore these materials should not be used in a compost pile.

Compost piles can be located outside, in a backyard or garden, or inside in a bin or tub. Wherever the compost is located, nature will do a great job of turning unwanted organic waste into fresh new food for plants. Use finished compost wherever you may want to improve the soil quality. For example spread finished compost into gardens, across your lawn, in flowerbeds, or around trees and shrubs.

1. What is humus?

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2. What is decomposition?

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3. How do earthworms help in the composting process?

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4. What materials can you put in a composting site?

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5. What materials do not go into a composting site?

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Below you will find information about how you can make your own compost site.