Name: _____ Date: _____

# Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Circle group

You can turn apple cores and banana peels into rich, dark soil. This is called composting. Tiny living things, worms, and bugs eat dead plant material. They break it into crumbly food for new plants.

To start a pile, you need two kinds of material. Green material is wet and full of nutrients. Fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and fresh grass are green. Brown material is dry. Dead leaves, shredded paper, and small twigs are brown. A good pile has more brown than green. Mix them together.

The pile needs air and water. Each week, an adult can stir it with a fork to let air in. The pile should feel as damp as a squeezed sponge. If it is too dry, add a little water. If it is too wet and smelly, add dry leaves.

Do not put in meat, fish, or dairy foods. They bring rats and flies. They make the pile smell bad.

After a few months, the bottom of the pile turns to dark compost. It smells like a forest. Mix it into a garden bed, and plants will grow well.

## Questions

**1. What is composting?**

_____

_____

**2. What are two green materials for a pile?**

_____

_____

**3. What kind of material should a pile have more of?**

_____

_____

**4. Why does an adult stir the pile with a fork?**

_____

_____

**5. What should you do if the pile is too wet and smelly?**

_____

_____

**6. Why should meat and dairy foods be left out?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

compost: dark, crumbly material made from rotted plants that helps soil
nutrients: substances that plants need to grow well
shredded: cut or torn into thin strips
damp: slightly wet

## Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

# Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Triangle group

Instead of throwing away apple cores and banana peels, a gardener can turn them into rich, dark soil. This is called composting. It works because tiny living things, along with worms and bugs, eat dead plant material and break it into crumbly food for new plants.

To start a compost pile, you need two kinds of material. The first kind is green material, which is wet and full of nutrients. Fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and fresh grass clippings are examples. The second kind is brown material, which is dry and woody. Dead leaves, shredded paper, and small twigs belong here. A good pile has more brown material than green, and the layers should be mixed together.

The pile also needs air and water. Every week or so, an adult can help stir it with a fork so that air gets inside. The pile should feel as damp as a squeezed sponge. If it is too dry, add a little water. If it is too wet and smelly, add more dry leaves.

Leave out meat, fish, and dairy foods. They can attract rats and flies and make the pile smell bad.

After a few months, the bottom of the pile turns into dark compost that smells like a forest floor. Mix it into a garden bed, and the plants will thank you.

## Questions

**1. What is composting?**

_____

_____

**2. What are two green materials for a compost pile?**

_____

_____

**3. What kind of material should a good pile have more of?**

_____

_____

**4. Why does an adult stir the pile with a fork?**

_____

_____

**5. What should you do if the pile is too wet and smelly?**

_____

_____

**6. Why should meat and dairy foods be left out?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

compost: dark, crumbly material made from rotted plants that helps soil
nutrients: substances that plants need to grow well
shredded: cut or torn into thin strips
damp: slightly wet
attract: to bring something closer

## Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

# Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Square group

Rather than throwing away apple cores and banana peels, a gardener can transform them into rich, dark soil through a process called composting. It works because microscopic organisms, together with worms and insects, consume dead plant material and reduce it to a crumbly food supply for new plants.

Starting a compost pile requires two types of material. The first is green material, which is moist and loaded with nutrients, and examples include fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and fresh grass clippings. The second is brown material, which is dry and woody, such as fallen leaves, shredded paper, and small twigs. An effective pile contains more brown material than green, and the layers should be thoroughly mixed.

The pile also requires air and moisture. About once a week, an adult can assist by turning it with a fork so that air reaches the center. The pile ought to feel about as damp as a squeezed sponge. If it becomes too dry, a little water will help, but if it turns soggy and smelly, adding dry leaves will correct the problem.

Meat, fish, and dairy foods should be left out entirely, because they can attract rats and flies and make the pile smell unpleasant.

After several months, the bottom layer becomes dark compost that smells like a forest floor. Work it into a garden bed, and the plants will reward you.

## Questions

**1. What is composting?**

_____

_____

**2. What are two green materials for a compost pile?**

_____

_____

**3. Which kind of material should an effective pile contain more of?**

_____

_____

**4. Why does an adult turn the pile with a fork?**

_____

_____

**5. What corrects a pile that is soggy and smelly?**

_____

_____

**6. Why should meat and dairy foods be left out?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

compost: dark, crumbly material made from rotted plants that helps soil
nutrients: substances that plants need to grow well
shredded: cut or torn into thin strips
damp: slightly wet
attract: to bring something closer

## Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

# For the teacher: Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

### Circle: Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Easier · 186 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.6

1. Turning dead plant scraps into rich soil.
2. Any two of fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, or fresh grass.
3. Brown material, such as dead leaves.
4. To let air in.
5. Add dry leaves.
6. They bring rats and flies and make the pile smell bad.

### Triangle: Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

This passage · 223 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.9

1. Turning scraps of dead plant material into rich soil.
2. Any two of fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, or fresh grass clippings.
3. Brown material, such as dead leaves.
4. To let air get inside.
5. Add more dry leaves.
6. They can attract rats and flies and make the pile smell bad.

### Square: Turning Kitchen Scraps into Soil

Harder · 230 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.5

1. A process that turns dead plant scraps into rich, dark soil.
2. Any two of fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, or fresh grass clippings.
3. Brown material, such as fallen leaves.
4. So that air reaches the center.
5. Adding dry leaves.
6. They can attract rats and flies and make the pile smell unpleasant.