Name: _____ Class: _____ 11/2/16

Nature's Recycling

Did you know that dead leaves, grass clippings, and fruit and vegetable peels are valuable natural resources? Rather than throw these things in the trash, we can put them to good use in a compost pile. Composting is nature's recycling method. It is a simple way to reuse plant waste. Composting breaks down plant materials into minerals and returns them to the soil. Adding composted soil to a garden helps to grow stronger, healthier plants. Composting keeps plant waste out of trash dumps. Some cities compost on a large scale in order to stop organic materials from taking up space in landfills.

Making your own compost is easy. You gather "food" for bacteria and fungi, then let them do the job. Choose an **inconspicuous** spot in your yard. Place a wood or wire bin there. It doesn't need a lid. That way, when it rains, the pile will get wet. Water helps the materials to decay. Throw kitchen scraps—things like tea bags, orange rinds, and potato peels—into the pile. When you cut your grass, add the clippings to the pile. As a general rule, you can add any brown or green plant matter. Although you can put in eggshells, never add animal droppings, cheese, or pieces of meat or fat. These things take a long time to break down and may attract wild animals.

About twice a month, you must turn the pile by digging it up a bit with a shovel. This way the rotting materials get more air. Many of the bacteria and fungi that break down materials cannot live without enough air. After just one year the compost pile will be smaller and will look like soil. This material is called humus. Humus contains carbon dioxide, calcium, phosphorus, and many other minerals. Spread the humus on your garden, and watch your plants grow. After they die, add them to the compost pile. Then you can recycle those minerals again!

Summarize this selection in one paragraph. Use important details from the article.

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