

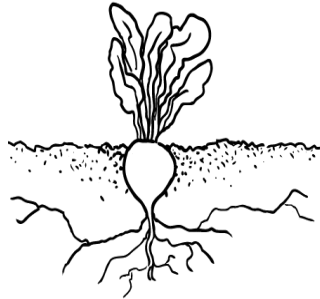


Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Supper from soil

Did you know that plants need "food" from the soil?

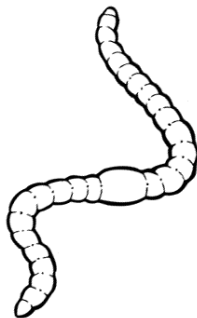
Plant food is made of many nutrients such as *nitrogen* (for leaf growth), *phosphorous* (for root, fruit, and flower growth) and *potassium* (for plant health).



Rocks, dead plants and animals become food for plants in nature. When plants need more food, adults sometimes add fertilizer, or compost made from old leaves, branches, fruits and vegetables.

There are many types of fertilizers.

Some fertilizers are human-made and some are made naturally. Natural fertilizers are healthy for plants because most feed plants slowly. Natural fertilizers are made from rocks, seaweed, corn and some animal poop, like horse manure or worm castings.



Home activity

You can make your own natural plant food from eggshells and grass clippings. Just crush up dry eggshells in a cloth napkin and mix these into the soil with grass clippings. Eggshells add *calcium*, and grass adds *nitrogen*.



A note to grownups

Did you know children tend to have higher exposures to garden chemicals than adults? It's true. They spend more time exploring through touch, smell and taste, so they ingest, inhale and absorb more chemicals. Protect them from the risk of avoidable, long-term health impacts by gardening naturally, without pesticides. It's easy, smart and fun.

Free programs and resources

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Blue Lake Natural Discovery Garden activities in Fairview, Ore.

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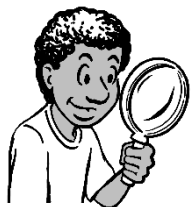
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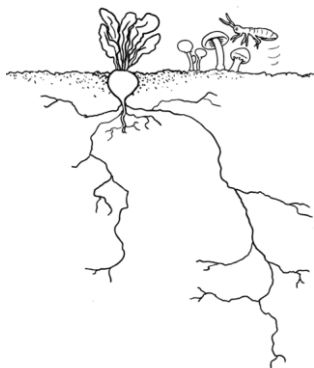


Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Compost critters

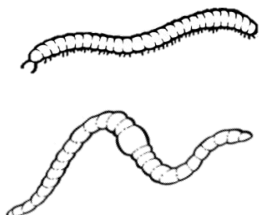
Have you ever wondered how dirt gets made?

There are billions of little critters that live in the soil, some so small that you can't even see them without a microscope! Many of these critters are called *decomposers*. They eat dead plants and animals and turn them into compost.



Worms, bacteria and millipedes are all

decomposers. Red worms eat moldy fruits and vegetables. Tiny bacteria feed on dead plants and animals. Many legged millipedes eat old leaves and branches. They all leave behind poop or castings that become nutrient-filled compost.

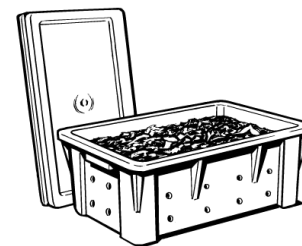


Sometimes adults use harmful garden chemicals to get rid of weeds and bugs, but these chemicals can make soil critters sick. Pull weeds by hand and attract birds and lady bugs to your garden to feed on pests.



Home activity

You can make your own compost with a worm bin. Drill ¼-inch holes in the sides and bottom of a lidded container. Use moist shredded newspaper for bedding and feed worms fruit and vegetable scraps.



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Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Native seeds

Have you ever found a seed in nature with wings like a helicopter, or little hooks that catch on your clothes? These tools help seeds travel and spread plants to new areas.



Native plants have lived in their home area for so long, that they have co-adapted with native wildlife there. They provide them with leaves and seeds for food and shelter, and in exchange, animals help spread their seeds.

Some seeds are brought in from other areas and spread where they're not wanted. They become weeds and take food and light from native plants.

Sometimes, adults use chemicals called *pesticides* to get rid of weeds. These chemicals can make people, pets, wildlife and native plants sick. So it is best to pull weeds and not use pesticides.



Home activity

Plant native flower seeds in your garden or in pots on your patio or porch and watch them grow. See which animals they attract. In a notebook draw pictures of all of the different animals that you see.



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Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Pollinator power



Did you know bees, butterflies and other pollinators help plants grow? They carry pollen from flower to flower. This helps plants make seeds that grow into new plants. Much of the food we eat would not be possible without pollinators.



Bees are powerful pollinators and most are very gentle. Mason bees are black and fuzzy. They live alone in small holes and will not sting. Bumblebees live in hives and are friendly unless their hive is threatened.



Pollinators can get sick or die when people spray garden chemicals. You can protect pollinators by gardening without pesticides. This will also protect our food that needs pollinators to grow.



Home activity

With an adult, you can make a mason bee house. Take a block of untreated wood and drill 5/16-inch holes 6-inches deep into it. Attach a small piece of wood to the top for a roof. Place the bee house on the south side of a pole or structure to warm the bees with the sun.



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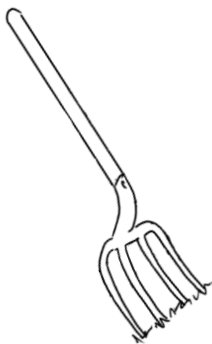
What is a weed?

Did you know weeds are plants in places we don't want them? In

their native habitat, they tend to get along fine with their neighbors. But if they travel to your yard or nature nearby, weeds can bully other plants by stealing food, water, light and space.



If you see a weed, it is a good idea to get rid of it before it spreads its seeds or roots. Pull or dig weeds or smother them with leaves, straw or other mulch. Fill empty garden spaces with good plants to prevent weeds from growing there later.



Sometimes, adults use chemicals called *herbicides* to get rid of weeds. *Herbicides* are a type of *pesticide*. They can make people, pets, helpful garden critters, and good plants sick. So it is best to pull weeds and not use pesticides.



Home activity

In the fall, gather up some leaves and spread them on bare soil in your garden. This will help keep weeds from sprouting, help your soil hold water and add plant food as the leaves decompose.



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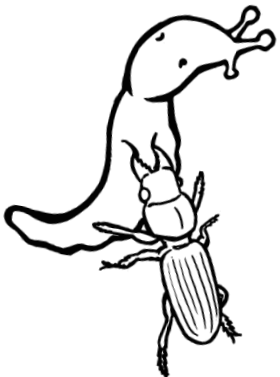
Pests and predators

Have you ever planted a seed, watered it and watched it grow, only to have it eaten by a bug? Critters that harm plants are called pests.



Spiders, lady bugs and other predators protect your yard from pests. Lady bugs lay their eggs on pest-covered leaves, and their babies feed on the pests. Spiders hunt pests or catch them in webs or traps. Birds also hunt pests.

You do not need to get rid of every pest in the garden. Birds, lady bugs, spiders and many other helpful critters would go hungry if there weren't any pests for them to eat.



Sometimes adults use chemicals to get rid of pests, but these can hurt helpful critters, like predators and pollinators. Instead, create a wildlife friendly garden. Add lots of flowers, trees, shrubs and logs for food and shelter, and a bug bath for water.

Home activity

You can make a bug bath for predators and other helpful garden critters. Place a dish filled with sand, rocks and water in a sunny spot and refill water when needed.



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Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Save our water

Did you know that only a tiny bit of the earth's water is drinkable? Even though water covers about 70 percent of the earth, only about 1 percent is drinkable. With so little safe water, it is a good idea to not use too much.



Different plants need different amounts of water. Lawns, roses and many other garden plants can take a lot of water. Many herbs, shrubs and trees don't need much water once they are established. Look for plants to grow in your garden that need less water.

There are many more ways to save water in your garden. *Drought-tolerant* plants don't need much water. Soaker hoses can use less water than sprinklers. Mulches (such as wood chips, leaves or bark dust) can be spread over bare soil to keep water from escaping into the air.



Home activity

You can make mulch for your garden to keep water from escaping into the air. Just gather up leaves in the fall and spread them 3-6 inches thick over bare soil. Be sure to keep them away from plant stems or tree trunks.



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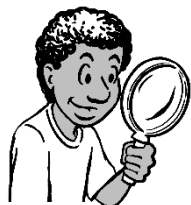
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Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Keep our water clean

Did you know that chemicals can get into the water and make it unsafe? We call these chemicals *pollutants*.



Pollutants come from oily roads, machines, and even from cleaning and gardening chemicals. When it rains, these can wash into lakes, rivers and streams and make fish and other critters sick.



You can prevent pollution.

Encourage adults to use safer and fewer chemicals for gardening and cleaning. Also, you can ride a bike or walk instead of driving.



Home activity

You can make your own safe cleaner. Add a cup of white vinegar to an empty spray bottle and then fill it up with water.



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Habitat Hero's helpful hints

Habitats at home

How many animals do you see

at home? Birds, insects, frogs, snakes, squirrels and many other animals make a home in your neighborhood.



Wildlife need food, water, shelter and a safe space to survive.

You can add plants with flowers, berries and seeds for food; a bird bath or small pond for water; logs, rocks and plants of all sizes for shelter.

Make a safe space for wildlife, by keeping pets that can harm wildlife in an enclosed area. And not using any harmful garden chemicals, called pesticides, which can make people, pets and wildlife sick.



Home activity

Plant native flower seeds in your garden or in pots on your patio or porch and watch them grow. See which animals they attract. In a notebook draw pictures of all of the different animals that you see.



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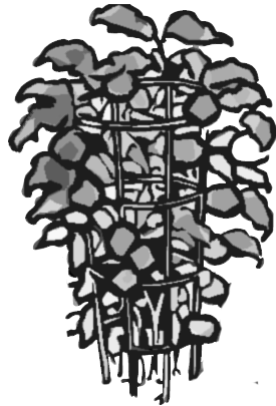
Grow a food garden

Did you know that it's easy and fun to grow food at home? All you need are seeds or starts, soil and a sunny place to grow them.



Water when needed and add natural fertilizers made from seaweed, corn or worm castings to give them a boost.

Choose the right season to grow your edible plants. Some veggies, like tomatoes, grow best in late spring and summer. Others, like peas, grow best in early spring and fall.



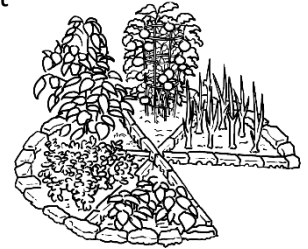
Grow without unhealthy bug

sprays. Beneficial insects, like lady bugs and bees, will eat pests on your plants and pollinate your veggies. Avoid bug sprays that might accidentally harm them. Plus, veggies grown without chemicals are healthier and taste better.



Home activity

You can make your own pizza garden at home. Plant pizza sauce ingredients, like tomatoes, onions, oregano, basil and garlic, in pots or a garden space. You can also add pizza topping plants, like peppers, zucchini and eggplant.



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