EDUCATOR NOTES:

Creating compost

Learning and Engagement Approach

This activity is designed to engage young learners aged from 7 – 13 years.

The activity is intended to:

- create compost
- increase awareness of soil conservation
- engage children in a hands-on learning activity
- incorporate elements of the English (literacy) curriculum
- encourage children to advocate for behaviour-change.

Safety Considerations

- Check the weather before conducting any outdoors activity. If there is going to be extreme temperatures, storms or high wind, postpone the activity.
- Ensure that everyone is wearing closed shoes, hats, and sunscreen and has a water bottle handy.
- Keep any allergy plan information at hand and any associated allergy medication.
- Wear gardening gloves to minimise the risk of insect bites.
- Leaf litter can be a home to animals such as spiders and centipedes; make sure children know not to touch animals, and only move them with paintbrushes and spoons.
- Implement manual handling procedures when lifting the materials, especially if they are wet.
- Ensure that everyone washes their hands after finishing this activity.

Materials and References

The compost bin can be obtained from your local hardware store, and some councils also supply these. An open bottomed compost bin will allow good contact with the soil to for worms and microorganisms to begin the breakdown process.

The compostable materials should be found in and around your local area, because the intention of composting is all about thinking global, but acting local. If you don't have some materials, consider putting a call-out to your local community as it is likely that they will have some leaves, green waste and other materials.

Site Suggestions

- This activity is best conducted at a cool time of day because it involves digging, lifting and moving materials.
- If you live in temperate regions this activity is best conducted from September – April.
- Ensure that you situate the compost in an area where it will not need to be moved.

Educator Tips

Engaging Learners

We recommend using the World as an Apple exercise as an engagement tool for this activity. This exercise uses an apple to model planet earth. As parts of the apple are cut away, the peel for 1/32 of the apple is all that remains. This sliver of peel represents the tiny amount of usable soil that we have on earth. This representation helps to highlight the importance of soil conservation.

Technical Notes

Composting is when organic material breaks down. There are many different ways of composting, and these vary according to the amount of time, expertise and equipment needed. The method of composting that we are employing in this exercise is designed to be as accessible as possible. It utilises simple materials and does not require too much monitoring.

- If your compost doesn't seem to be working, or smells, consider aerating, wetting or adding some 'brown' materials. Try one of these things at a time and wait for a week or two before trying something else. ADAM is a guiding principle of composting. ADAM stands for: Aliveness, Diversity, Aeration and Moisture.
- Avoid putting excessive carbohydrates such as bread in the compost. These foods encourage rodents.
- If you live in a temperate region the compost may take longer to break down over the cooler months of the year.

Aligning this Activity

- Soil - more than just dirt!
- Creating a food garden series
- Creating a worm farm
- Investigating the soil food web

Extension Activities

Extension 1

Use a thermometer to check the temperature of the compost regularly and record the results in a graph.

Extension 2

Use the World as an Apple exercise to illustrate how important soil is and the scarcity of this resource (see the educator notes for more information about this exercise).

Community Engagement

Use The National Landcare Directory to find a community environmental 'care' group near you.

Use this Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network map to find a City Farm or Community Garden near you to get some ideas for this project

Curriculum and Framework Links

SCIENCE

Year 2: ACSSU030, ACSHE035
Year 3: ACSSU044, ACSIS054
Year 4: ACSHE062, ACSIS064
Year 5: ACSHE083
Year 6: ACSSU094, ACSHE100
Year 7: ACSHE120
Year 8: ACSHE135

ENGLISH

Year 2: ACELY1671
Year 3: ACELY1682
Year 4: ACELY1694
Year 5: ACELY1704
Year 6: ACELY1714
Year 7: ACELY1725
Year 8: ACELY1736

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Year 2: ACHASSI042
Year 3: ACHASSI052, ACHASSI059, ACHASSI060
Year 4: ACHASSI080, ACHASSK088, ACHASSK090
Year 5: ACHASSI102, ACHASSK120
Year 6: ACHASSI122, ACHASSI130

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGIES

Year 2: ACTDEK003
Year 3 & 4: ACTDEP017
Year 5 & 6: ACTDEP019
Year 7 & 8: ACTDEK032

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Year 2: ACPPS018, ACPPS022, ACPPS023
Year 3 & 4: ACPPS036, ACPPS040, ACPPS041
Year 5 & 6: ACPPS054, ACPPS059
Year 7 & 8: ACPPS073, ACPPS078

ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING

Exploring values, rights and responsibilities

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY
Social awareness

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Outdoor Learning

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY
Sustainability

MY TIME, OUR PLACE: FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL AGE CARE
Outcome 2 and 4