

Name: _____

Make Your Own Compost!

In “Farm-Fresh Perspective” (p. 12) you learned about The Farm School in Massachusetts where kids visit a farm and produce their own organic food. In order to grow organic fruits and vegetables, a farmer does not use synthetic fertilizer or pesticides. Instead, the farmer uses *composted* fertilizer made from decayed organic material like plant-based food scraps.

Predict

How long does it take food scraps to turn into compost?

Materials

large flowerpot • enough dirt to fill the pot halfway • food scraps • large trash bag • spoon or fork • water

Procedure

- Using the dirt, fill the flowerpot so it is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ full.
- Add some leftover food scraps from lunch, such as bread crusts, apple cores, banana peels, and leftover salad. **IMPORTANT:** Do not add meat, dairy products, or fatty foods because they will smell bad and may attract pests.
- Cover the mixture with a thin layer of soil. This will keep the compost from smelling.
- Put the pot outside in a spot where no one will disturb it.
- Cover the pot with the trash bag.
- Stir your compost mixture every few days with the spoon or fork.
- Keep your compost damp by adding a little water to it every few days.
- Repeat steps 6 and 7 until your food scraps turn into compost.
- Put a flower or vegetable plant in your flowerpot and watch it grow!

Conclusions

- How long did it take for your food and dirt mixture to turn into compost?
- What do you think helped break down the food?
- What variables could you change to make the process take more or less time?

