



# 5 COMPOSTING

*Decomposers play an important role in composting.*

3RD–5TH GRADE

*Learn more about decomposers and how they help with composting.*

## 1. GET STARTED

- ▶ What do you think happens to your leftover food? Or to a tree that falls down in a storm?
- ▶ Do you think either can be recycled?

Yes! Certain foods can be recycled by composting. Composting is when organic items like apple cores, kale stems or banana peels, decompose or decay. They break down into small pieces and then eventually turn into soil. The same thing happens naturally in the forest with dried leaves, branches, and dead trees.

## 2. DIVE IN

How do we compost at The JK Community Farm?

- ▶ We use what is called three-tier composting. We move the compost from one bin to the other as it begins to decay.
- ▶ Walk by the three bins—which one do you think has the freshest material? Which one is most decomposed? How can you tell?
- ▶ You can use a thermometer to measure the temperature in each bin. Which do you think is the warmest? Why?
- ▶ Another type of composting is called vermicomposting because it uses worms to help with composting. These decomposers have special characteristics that make them very good composters.
  - Worms eat rotten food! They eat bacteria on decaying plants, food, and even cardboard and paper. Everything that worms eat passes through their bodies and is turned into rich fertile soil.

Composting is made with **green** items that are often leftover food scraps, and **brown** ingredients that are often dried leaves, branches or grass. They are helped in the process by decomposers, organisms such as fungi, worms and pillbugs, that break down plant and animal matter. In the forest this happens naturally, but at home and at the farm we can help the process along.

- Worms dig tunnels! The tunnels they dig break up the soil so that the water can reach the roots more easily, which helps plants grow.
- Look at the worm bin near the compost bins. You can dig through the worm bin to carefully watch the worms and, if you would like, **gently pick one up to take a closer look**. Please gently return them to the bin when you are finished.
- The worm diagram below and in the resource book will help you identify different parts of the worm's body.

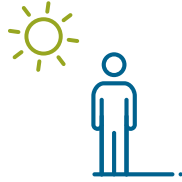
## LEARN MORE

The FoodPrints TV Videos [Worms and Compost](#) and [All About Compost](#) provide additional background about composting. When cooking, be sure to save carrot peels, apple cores and cauliflower leaves for the compost bin.



# FIELD TRIP MAP

parking lot



1 HUMAN SUNDIAL

picnic tables



2 GREENHOUSES



3 RAISED BEDS



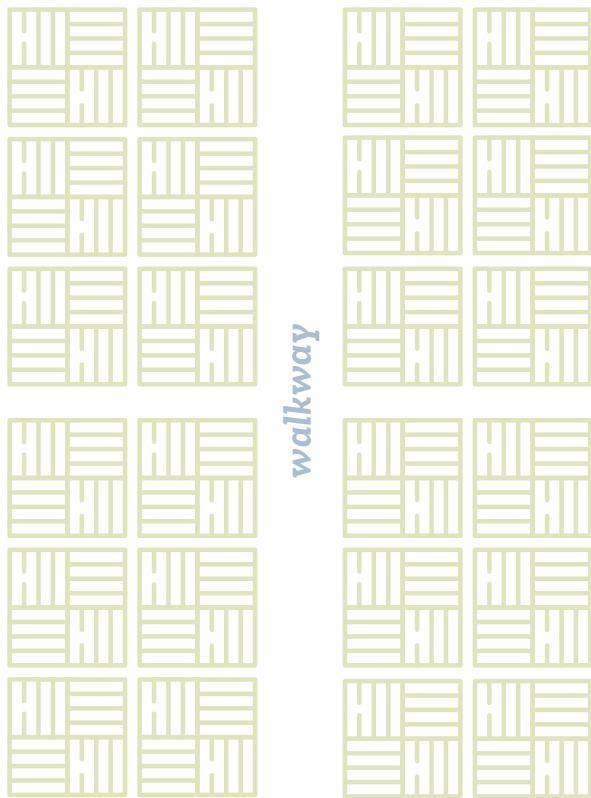
4 "APIARY" BEE HIVES



5 THREE TIER COMPOST SYSTEM



6 BLUEBIRD TRAIL STARTING POINT



7 BEE HOTEL



10 EDIBLE FLOWERS



9 SENSORY FOOTPATH



8 POLLINATOR HABITAT