

# A STORY ABOUT THE SOIL CYCLE

**Introduction:** Read the story below to answer the questions that follow on the next page.

Whether you want to grow fresh produce or beautiful flowers, gardening can be fun for everyone! Gardens come in many sizes and shapes. The process of gardening is not only a fun way to grow your own food and plants, but it is also a detailed, multi-step process. From seed to plant to fruit, there are exciting and unique steps in plant growth and in the soil nutrient cycle.

To start, a seed is planted in the soil. Soil is made up of different things including rocks, living things including plants and animals, animal remains, air, and water. As a seed starts to grow it turns into an embryo, and we call this process germination. Seeds need both sunlight and water to evolve into seedlings and then fully-grown plants. The seedling sends down roots deep into the soil to uptake nutrients from the soil. Sunlight is taken in through the leaves of the plant and turned into food, something we call photosynthesis, which continues to help the seedling grow.

As the seedling turns into a plant, it experiences many fun changes! First, it grows a strong stem where all the water and food move throughout the plant from leaves to roots. Some plants will even grow flowers. These beautiful flowers attract pollinators which helps the plants grow their final product, their fruit and seeds. Think of a tomato! It grows from a plant that flowers and then we can slice them up and enjoy them on a sandwich.

What about the leftovers from that tomato that you didn't eat? They don't have to go to waste! Plant scraps are filled with nutrients that can be returned to the soil. Worms, insects, and other tiny creatures break up the scraps in a process called decomposition. The product of this process is known as compost, a rich plant food that helps your garden grow. Compost can be added back to our soil and the soil nutrient cycle can start again when new seeds are planted. The gardening process is continuous and we get to help it along the way while enjoying the products it gives us.



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**Instructions:** After reading the soil cycle story, answer these questions by correctly selecting answer A or B. Cite evidence for each answer in the text by underlining it. Then, on the coloring page, color each numbered section with the color listed in the correct answer for each question.

Question 1: What is the name of the process when a plant turns sunlight into food?

A: Photosynthesis - Color #1 Red  
B: Decomposition - Color #1 Orange

Question 2: Pollinators help plants to grow their \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Flowers - Color #2 Purple  
B: Fruits - Color #2 Green

Question 3: True or False - Water and food move through the stem to different parts of the plant.

A: True - Color #3 Dark Green  
B: False - Color #3 Dark Blue

Question 4: The process of a seed growing into an embryo is known as \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Respiration - Color #4 Red  
B: Germination - Color #4 Brown

Question 5: True or False - Plant scraps have no nutrient value and should be thrown away.

A: True - Color #5 Black  
B: False - Color #5 Light Blue

Question 6: What is the process where worms and other creatures break down plant scraps?

A: Decomposition - Color #6 Gray  
B: Compost - Color #6 Pink



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## COLORING PAGE

