



Focus on Forests

A Forest Ecosystem Education Guide

Activities and Lesson Plans for Teachers and Resource Educators



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Nature's Throwaways

Lesson Summary

The natural cycle of decay in the forest will be explored.

PRIMARY FOF3



Objectives

- To discuss the natural litter found on the forest floor
- To develop an understanding of the importance and role of this litter
- To analyze different components of litter

Throwaway

- What happens to things after you throw them away?



- Recycled
- Landfill
- Organic waste

Throwaway

- What types of things does nature “throwaway”?

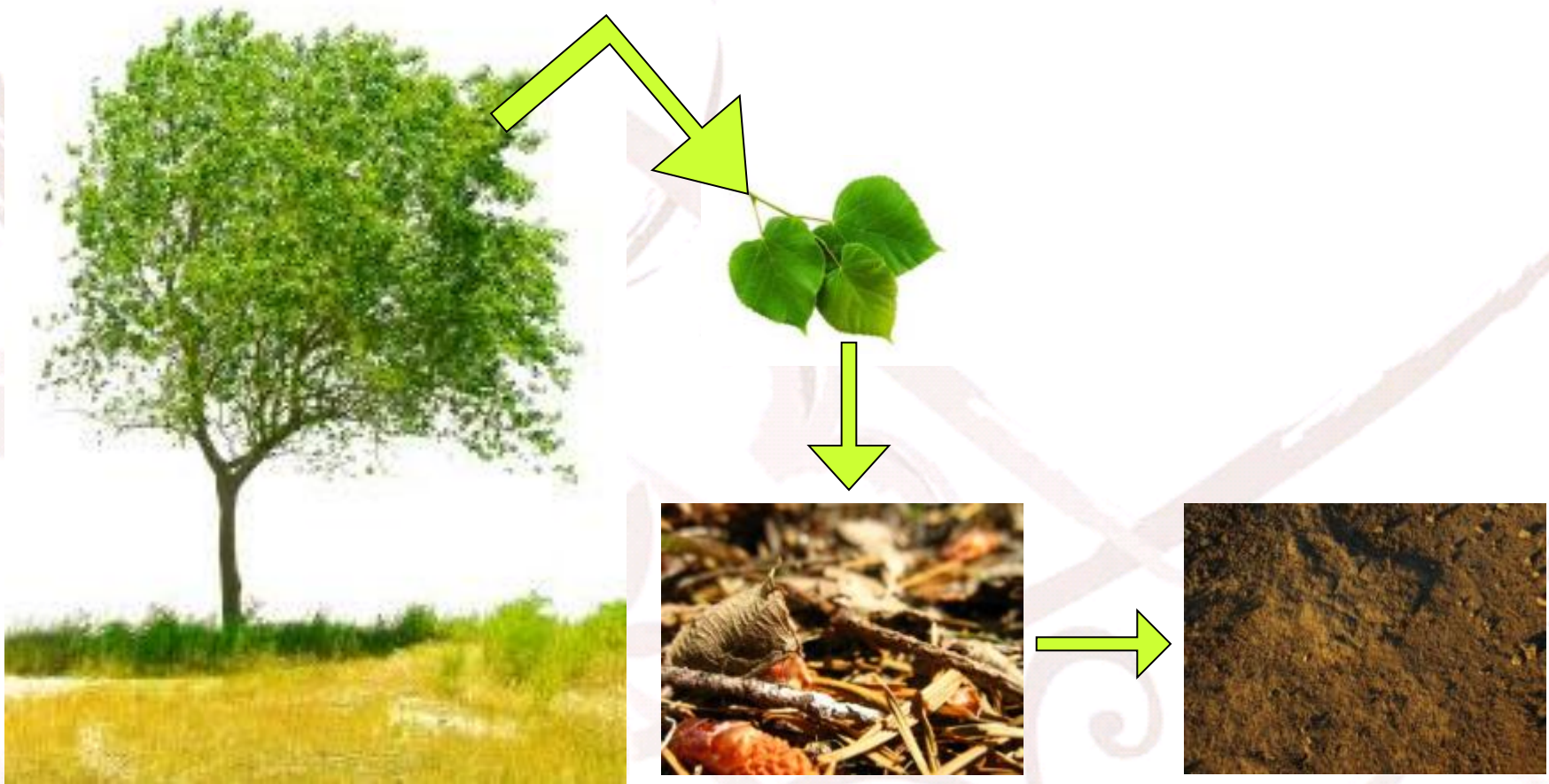


- What happens to nature’s garbage?

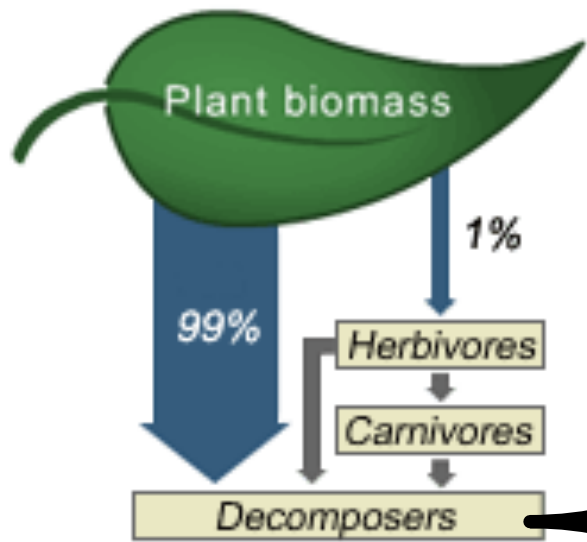
Decomposition

- What is decomposition?
 - Process in which organic material is reduced
 - i.e. decomposition of leaves to small pieces that eventually gets turned into soil
- Constant cycle of life and death

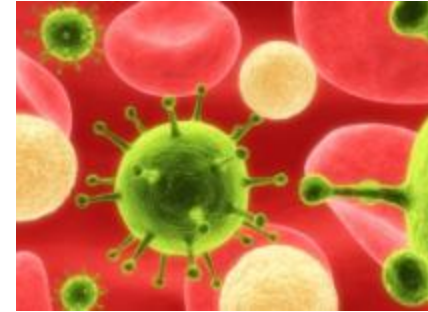
Forest Cycle



Decomposers



Bacteria



Fungi



Insects



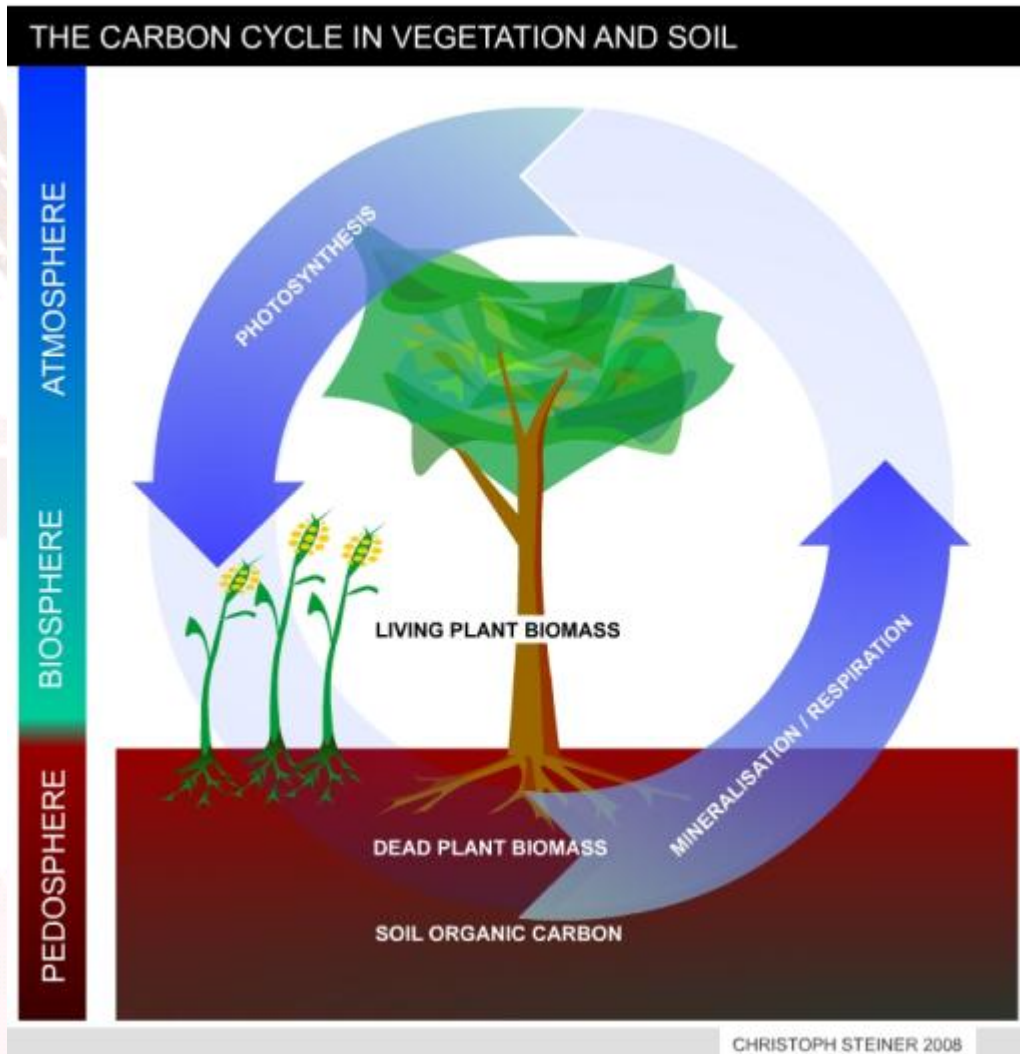
Earthworms



Decomposition

- The rate of decomposition depends on the local climatic conditions
 - Warmer areas- litter decomposes more quickly
 - Colder areas- slow decomposition
- The rate of decomposition determines the depth of the litter
 - Eventually everything is decomposed

Carbon



- When organic matter decomposes, carbon is released into the atmosphere
- Carbon can also be stored in dead plant matter as peat or coal

Activity

- In the forest
 - Observe the things lying on the ground
 - Work your way down through the forest litter until soil is reached
 - What changes take place in the litter as you go deeper?
 - Take a sample of the litter
 - What is found in the sample?

Litter



Bark

Twigs

Leaves

Roots

Flowers

Branches

Cones

Needles

Seeds

Decomposers

Review

- The forest floor is made up of different parts of plants
- Litter is broken down by decomposers, making nutrients available to plants
- Litter is important for moisture retention, nutrient sources and habitat