

Nature Reuses and Recycles

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 690



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Written by Molly Wetterschneider

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Glossary

bacteria (<i>n.</i>)	very tiny organisms that feed on dead plants and animals (p. 10)
chemicals (<i>n.</i>)	basic building blocks that form matter (p. 10)
environments (<i>n.</i>)	the conditions affecting an organism in an area (p. 6)
materials (<i>n.</i>)	objects used to make things (p. 4)
nutrients (<i>n.</i>)	substances that living things need to live, stay healthy, and grow (p. 12)
organic (<i>adj.</i>)	related to living things (p. 6)
organisms (<i>n.</i>)	living things (p. 9)
recycled (<i>v.</i>)	to break down something into materials that can be remade into new things (p. 4)
reusing (<i>v.</i>)	using something again (p. 5)



Thank you for recycling!

Let's Learn from Nature

When you think of all the ways that living things use other living and dead things, you can see that nature does an awful lot of reusing and even some recycling. People try to reuse and recycle as much as they can so that they create less trash. But, nature reuses or recycles every part of every living thing. We can learn a lot from nature.



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Word Wise

The word *recycle* has two word parts: *re-* and *-cycle*. The word part *re-* means "again." The word part *-cycle* means to circle around. Just as a bicycle wheel circles around and around, recycled materials can move from your home to a recycling plant and back to your home again.

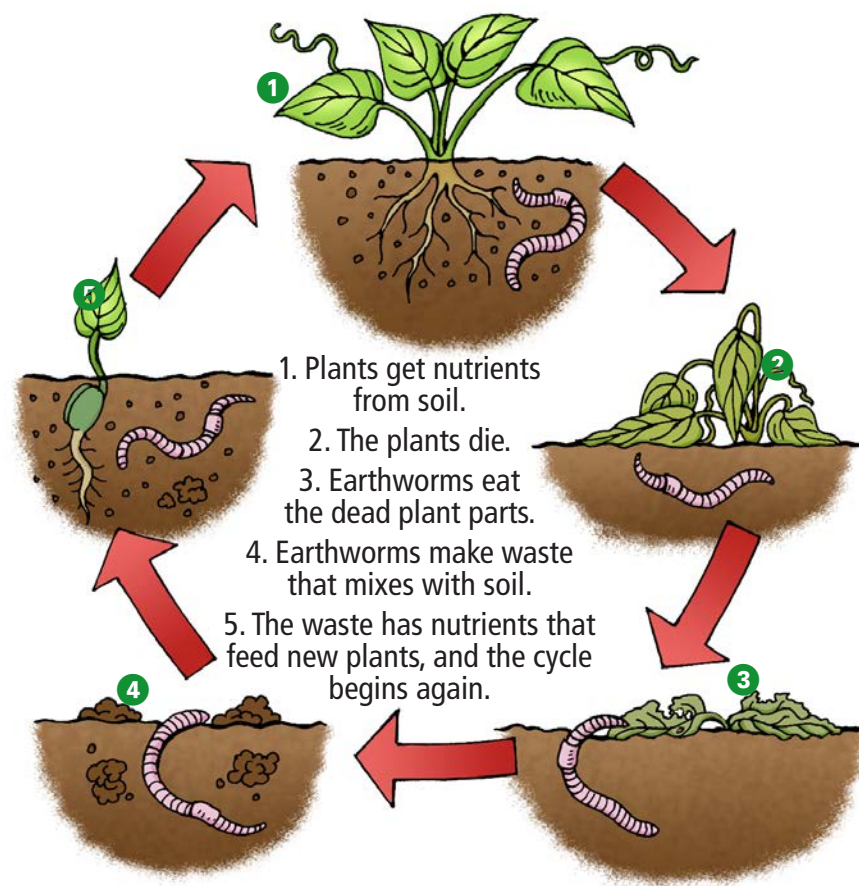
Recycle, Reuse, or Trash?

Clink! Bonk! Plunk!

Those are the sounds of cans and bottles being tossed into the recycling bin. When you throw away waste, you put it in the trashcan. But, some waste is not trash at all. Bottles, cans, and newspapers can be **recycled**. Recycling something means that the **materials** that make up the thing can be remade into a new thing.

Nutrients Cycle Through Nature

Materials in nature can be said to go through a recycling process, much like our recycling of bottles and paper. A plant gets nutrients from soil in order to grow. When the plant dies, earthworms eat it. The earthworms' waste then makes nutrients for living plants. The natural materials move in a circle from plants to worms and back to plants again.





When earthworms eat dead plants, their bodies make waste. These bits of waste look like little blobs of soil, and in fact, these blobs are rich food for plants. They contain many **nutrients** that plants need to develop and grow. Nutrients are what food contains that give living things energy or help them to grow. Plants take up nutrients from the soil through their roots.

Recycling is different from **reusing**. When you reuse something, you use it again. You keep it in the same form and do not have to break it down into its materials first. When you reuse a bottle, you might fill it up with water again. You do not have to reuse something for its original purpose. When you reuse a soup can, you might keep pencils in it. When you reuse newspaper, you might use it to wrap birthday presents.



After you are through reusing something, you can then recycle it or reuse it again!



Nature Reuses and Recycles

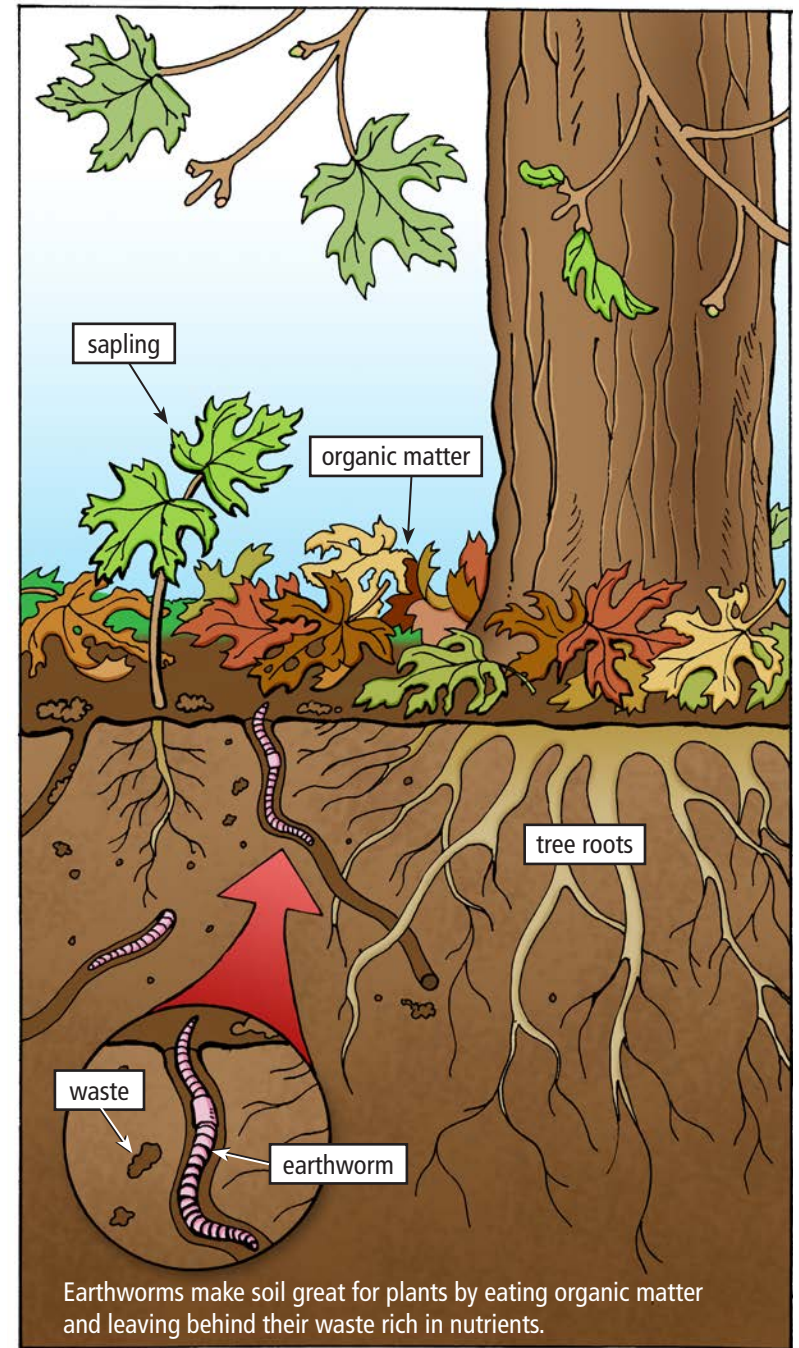
People are not the only ones who reuse and recycle. Nature does this too with organic materials. **Organic** materials are the things of which living things are made. The reusing and recycling of organic materials in nature is how living things adapt and survive in their **environments**.



Nature recycles



People recycle



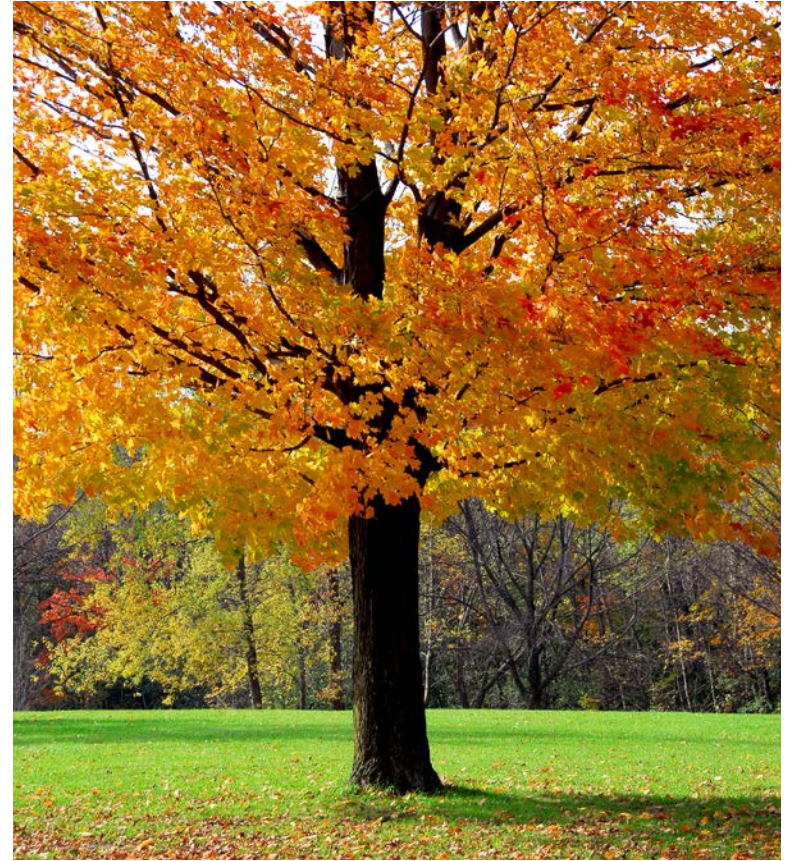
Earthworms make soil great for plants by eating organic matter and leaving behind their waste rich in nutrients.

Some Living Things Eat Dead Things

Mushrooms and organisms too small to see, which are called **bacteria**, feed on dead things such as fallen trees. These organisms break down a dead thing's organic materials. This process makes **chemicals** that can be used by other living things.



Some animals eat dead things, too. For example, an earthworm will eat dead leaves that fall to the ground. It will also eat plants that have died and begun to rot.



What parts of this tree might be used by other living things?

Remember that things in nature reuse organic materials. A tree is not just a tree. Every part of a tree can be used and reused in some way by other living things. The original purpose of a tree's leaves is to make food for the tree to survive. But plants, insects, birds, and other animals have adapted to use parts from the tree to help them survive, too.



A tree's leaves offer shade for sprouting plants. Birds line their nests with twigs and leaves. Sometimes squirrels will reuse a bird's nest for their own. Some insects make homes from dead leaves. So you see, the tree leaves are used to provide food for the tree, shade for a plant, a home for a bird, a home for a squirrel, and a home for an insect. That's five uses for the same leaves!

Trees are used in other ways, too. Owls make homes in hollows of tree trunks. Beavers cut down trees and branches to make their homes and dams. Some animals also eat bark, leaves, and fruit from trees.

Trees also provide valuable help to other living things when they die. Fallen trees become "nurse logs" that provide food and a protected place to grow for new trees and other plants. Dead trees can also provide food and building materials for other **organisms**.

