

# *Introduction to Composting*

The history of making & using compost dates back through the history of early agriculture and beyond. In fact, nature has been engaged in composting since the very beginning. The wonderful smell of a forest floor is the smell of humus which is, quite simply, completely rotted plants and animals. The original organic matter is no longer discernable and you have rich, black, sweet-smelling, crumbly, soil-like substance. Decomposed organic matter is **compost**.

Composting is a natural “rotting” process, which is the breakdown of organic material by bacteria and other critters like worms, beetles, mites, etc. It happens all around us with the leaves on the forest floor, the oranges in the fridge, the apple in the lunch bag or the salmon on the riverbank, and of course in the compost pile. Trees, insects, birds, flowers, water, minerals and people are all interconnected in this essential and continuous cycle of decomposition and regeneration.

Humus acts to balance water, provide nutrients and buffer acidic and alkaline conditions. It is a crucial part of healthy soils that provides good growing conditions for plants and good homes for other important life-sustaining organisms.

Plants and animals come from and then return to the soil with the help of bacteria and other organisms. Therefore, the act of composting and the resultant humus (compost), along with air and water, are vital in maintaining planetary health. When humans intercede and start burying compostables in giant landfills along with all sorts of non-compostables like plastic, glass and metals, the natural rotting action can be delayed for a very long time.

When we don't use organics for the highest and best use by assisting in its eventual return it to the earth as humus, tremendous health potential is lost to the soil, plants, animals and other organisms.