

OUTDOORS \* GRADES 2-6 \* FALL, SPRING \* PROJECT



# Bring in the Cleanup Crew

## DESCRIPTION

Students bury various objects in the ground and dig them up weekly to observe changes.

## OBJECTIVE

To observe the rate of decay of various materials.

## MATERIALS

- \* Observation Sheet, 1 per student, page 416
- \* various decomposing and nondecomposing materials: metal, glass, plastic, rubber, vegetables, bone, wood, paper, rope, leather, feathers, and so on
- \* shovel
- \* markers: sticks, stones
- \* science journals

## PREPARATION

Gather a variety of objects that will and will not decompose in the ground. Display them during the discussion.

## CLASS DISCUSSION

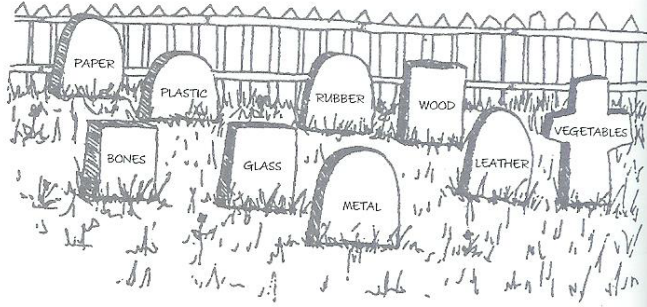
*(Show the collected materials.)* Let's put these objects in order from those that will change the most when they are put in the ground to those that will change the least. Now how could we test this?

## ACTION

1. Have students take the various different materials you have gathered and bury each item in a different hole, all at the same depth. Have them mark each spot with a stick or a stone, and record what they buried in their science journals.
2. Once a week, have students dig up the items and record in their journals how fast and in what ways each item is decaying. *(If you think students might damage items when they dig or might have difficulty finding each one, put a screen over the material before putting the soil in the holes.)*
3. Expand the activity by placing the same or similar items on the surface of the soil and have students compare rates of decomposition.

## WRAP UP

What factors affected the speed of decay of the various objects? How did the results compare with your predictions? Which of the items we buried would be good items to put in a compost pile?



# Observation Sheet

<p>Date: _____</p> <p><u>Observations:</u></p>	<p>Date: _____</p> <p><u>Observations:</u></p>
<p>Date: _____</p> <p><u>Observations:</u></p>	<p>Date: _____</p> <p><u>Observations:</u></p>