

Worms in Soil Demonstration

Level: Elementary School Level

Time: 10 minutes with discussion

Occasionally, teachers may request regional representatives to come and teach in the classroom about soil, and this demonstration is guaranteed to captivate interest!

Worms and soil go together when students look at the essentialness of healthy soil in growing plants.

Materials:

Two glass jars or clear plastic containers (locking lids work best)

Worms (Canadian Crawlers can be found in bait shops and are often larger than local worms)

Tin foil to cover the jars pre-event

Carrot

Moist soil

Optional: two or three different colors/shades of soil

Procedure:

1. Three days before the event, add soil to the jars.
 - a. If available, add layers of different colors/types of soil.
2. Add worms to one of the jars; the other jar will not have worms in it.
3. Worm Care: Make sure that the soil is moist, or the worms will dry out. Cover the sides of the containers with tin foil so that the worms will be in the dark.
4. Add small bits and scrapes of carrots to the top of the soil in both containers. Over the next few days, the worms will bring the bits of carrots down into the soil. Because of the orange color, it will be easy for students to observe how some carrots were 'pulled' into the soil.
5. Take the foil covering off for the presentation so students can see the wormholes and worms. Remind students to carefully hold the containers with both hands as they pass them around.
6. Questions for discussion:
 - a. What do you see different between both containers?
 - b. What have the worms been doing these last few days?
 - c. What do plants need to grow?
 - d. How do worms help plants grow? They make room for air in the soil, and they help move nutrients into the root zone of plants. Worm casting (worm poop) also provides wonderful humus for plants.
 - e. What nutrients in soil help plants grow?