Children learn that soil is also special for its ability to 'magically' decompose green things.

Soil's Magic 3



Keywords **school grounds • experiment • observation • photo story • English**

1. Introducing the idea
This activity explores the fascinating process of plant decomposition, a key part of the life cycle. You'll need:

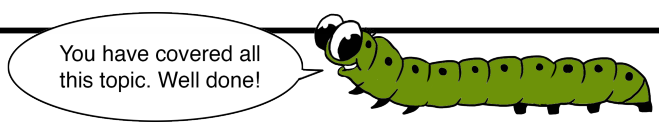
- A fresh tray/container;
- Some leaves (orange tree leaves work beautifully, as they leave behind a delicate lace of veins);
- Soil saved from Soil Magic 2;

Tell the children they are becoming scientists on a new investigation, to see if the soil has even more hidden magic! To make it fun, add props like a cardboard magnifying lens or "scientist badges" before heading out to observe.

2. Setting up the experiment
Take the children to the Soil Magic spot with your materials and a camera. Fill the tray with soil (keeping some aside). Lay the leaves flat on the surface, take an overhead photo, then cover them lightly with soil and sprinkle a little water. Print the photo for your Soil Magic display and project it in class so children can look closely at the leaves' details. Then, set the tray aside and leave it for a couple of weeks.

3. Observing changes
After 2–3 weeks, revisit the tray. Carefully brush away the top layer of soil, trying not to move the leaves. Notice what has changed. Take another overhead photo and compare it with the first. Ask the children to spot the differences and discuss what they think is happening, how, and why.

4. Watching decomposition over time
Repeat the process every couple of weeks. Each time, take a new photo and encourage children to notice the gradual changes until only the leaf veins, or less, remain. Keep the sense of wonder alive by asking what might be causing the changes and linking the discussion to topics about decomposition, soil life, and recycling in nature.



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5. Creating a story of change
Back in class, use the series of photos to build a story line that shows the stages of decomposition. Add letters, numbers, or captions to illustrate what has happened.

Send photos of

- ☐ Children placing leaves in soil
- ☐ The story line display
- ☐ Children observing and taking photos

Resources & Equipment Needed

- Tray/container;
- Tree leaves (Orange tree leaves are a good option);
- Soil (saved from Soil Magic 2);
- Paper & card;
- Coloured pens/pencils;
- Scissors;
- Camera/phone;
- Cup of water.

