



Finding Harder-to-Locate Materials for the Ecosystems Unit

Here are suggestions for finding some of the more difficult to find materials for the ecosystems unit. Most of the materials are games that need to be made from the resources supplied in the unit. Most of the other materials are easy to find at hardware stores or the local supermarket. You may also find substitutions for the materials here that work and still communicate the lesson ideas.

Section 2:

Rotting Log – These are often the most difficult items to find for the unit, particularly if you live in an urban area. In this case, it may work best to combine this activity with a field trip to a nearby woods that allows public access. We do not recommend taking logs from nature preserves. The rotten log provides a home to many creatures and so removing it would likely be against the regulations at the site. Teachers who have used this unit had often had success getting logs from people who have decaying woodpiles. We encourage you to return the dissected logs and organisms to the location where you found them following the activity.

Section 3:

Worms for the Worm Tank- These are easily gotten from a fishing supply store. They typically come in containers of 12-15 and in a variety of sizes. We have typically purchased medium-sized night crawlers. They can also be ordered from a science supply store such as suggested in the unit.

Two Tall, Narrow Tanks- We found the ones pictured in the lessons in a pet store. They were inexpensive acrylic. There are many options on-line but prices can get expensive. One inexpensive option is to divide a regular glass aquarium tank, as long as you can divide it well enough to keep the worms on one side. Another option is if you can't find a tall, narrow tank, is to use two wider aquarium tanks and plan on giving the demonstration a longer time to show results.

It is also possible to use a root-view kit from one of the science supply catalogues or on-line supplier (even Amazon has them). These are small narrow tanks intended for seed growing so that students can see the roots.

Section 4:

Time Lapse Video- Additional time lapse videos of fruit and vegetables rotting can be easily found on line on YouTube and elsewhere—just be sure to prescreen!