

B. ORGANISMS IN THE SOIL

Background:

The soil is the home for an intricate community of organisms, both plant and animal. They may range in size from those too small to be seen with a powerful microscope to those as large as earthworms. Those animals that can be seen without the aid of a microscope include earthworms, snails, slugs, and arthropods. Many of the smaller microscopic organisms, important as decomposers, include protoza, fungi, and bacteria.

Most of the organisms that you find living in the soil will be so small that a microscope will be needed to see them. But large or small, each organism plays an important role in the complex web of life of the soil itself. Organisms that inhabit the soil contribute greatly to improving aeration, drainage, soil mixture, and in converting organic matter to inorganic forms that assist plant development.

Students will examine some of the plants and animals that are part of the organic community in the next series of activities. Various local soils are utilized during these activities.

B₁. SOIL ANIMALS

Objective:

To determine what animals and materials are found in the soils in various areas.

Materials Needed:

measuring cup

hand lens

jars (4 per soil sample)

newspaper

dissecting scopes
microscopes