Renewing the Earth’s Abundance

When they were satisfied, He told his disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.’ John 6:12

It is He who produceth gardens with trellises and without and dates and tilth with produce of all kinds and olives and pomegranates [in kind] and different [in variety]; eat of their fruit in season but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters. Qu’ran 31:10

Introduction

The Earth is just teeming with life! Everywhere we look, under our feet and over our heads, we can see and marvel at just how abundant are God’s gifts. Sometimes these gifts – of air, water, soil, other species - can seem so limitless, that we forget that they are not. But just as we require rest and nourishment, so does the Earth and the life that dwells upon it. Just as we need clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, and clean soil in which to grow our food, so does everything else on our planet, from the smallest organism to the largest elephant. There are things we can do – and things we can refrain from doing – to replenish ourselves and the Earth, so that all stay healthy. We can consume fewer material goods, and reuse and recycle those that we must use. We can make sure not to litter or pour chemicals into our water or pollute our air. We can grow our food without pesticides and weed killers that damage the soil. And we can slow down a little and give ourselves and the Earth a break, at least once a week, when we observe our days of rest. In doing all of these things, we can help to renew our beautiful planet.

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Prayer for Renewal of the Earth

God, the richness of your Creation amazes us and fills us with wonder. We see that when the Earth is in balance, everything works well together. But when the waters, the land, and the sky are not well, Then the Earth is unhappy And so are we.

We pray for help in being good stewards of the Creation
We pray for help in restoring the oceans, lakes, rivers, and ponds, so that they are once again filled with fish and not polluted.

We pray for help in renewing the soil, so that everyone may enjoy healthy food long into the future.

We pray for help in cleaning the air, so that all may breathe easily.

We pray for all of the other plants and animals who call the Earth home, too. Their presence and beauty enriches us in so many ways.

Please help us learn not only how to use less of the Earth’s resources, but also how to heal the Earth from the damage that has already been done.

Finally, we pray that all people will come to respect and renew the environment, and that everyone will learn how to live a life of harmony with your Creation.

Amen.
Song

Note: So often, we throw away our garbage without giving a second thought to where it ends up. We think that it has just gone “away.” Of course, there is no such place as “away.” Our “away” is usually someone else’s backyard, or some animal’s home. Nearly all of what we throw away can actually be composted or recycled instead. When we compost, we return valuable nutrients to the soil, renewing its fertility. When we recycle, we prevent the mining and use of new resources, saving them for more important purposes. In doing these things, we keep in mind that nothing ever really just goes “away.”

We suggest that teachers sing the refrain from the song several times, and in between each refrain, pose questions to the children to help them consider the idea that there’s no such place as “away.” Some questions to ask might be:

- What happens to your garbage after it leaves your house?
- Where does it go? How long does it stay there?
- Do you think that anyone or anything lives by the landfill/incinerator, etc.?
- What would it be like to live there?
- Are there other things you could do with your garbage?
- Why might we want to make less trash? What happens when there’s no more space in the landfill?

There’s No Such Place as Away

Leader: One, Two, Three, Four
All: Throw it away!

Leader: Where’s away?
All: There’s no such place as away!

All: Throw it away!

Leader: Where’s away?
All: There’s no such place as away!

All: Well, what do you think?
If you throw it out do you think it disappears?
Oh me! Oh my!
Some of this stuff will stay forever.

To hear the melody for this song, visit John Pitney’s [website](http://johnpitney.org/music.html). It’s the sixth song on the album, Walk Lightly on the Earth, at the bottom of the webpage.

Words and music by John Pitney: [http://johnpitney.org/music.html](http://johnpitney.org/music.html)
Juice Lid Wind Chimes

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials:
- Frozen juice can lids
- Acrylic paint
- Glitter
- Sticks
- Fishing line or other string
- Tape

Instructions:
- Children can decorate the juice can lids with the paint and glitter.
- Let the lids dry.
- While the lids are drying, help the participants tie two sticks together crosswise using the fishing line or other string.
- When the lids are dry, tape a piece of string to each lid and tie the other end around a stick.
- Repeat several times to make creative wind chimes from recycled materials!
Recycling Round-Up

**Time Needed:** 30 minutes

**Materials:**
- Recyclable materials: plastic water bottles, aluminum cans, glass bottles, etc.
- Trash (not anything dirty): granola bar wrappers, plastic packaging, etc.
- Compost (again, nothing gross): orange peels, dried leaves, sticks, etc.
- Five containers (old 10-gallon paint buckets, or milk crates, or cardboard boxes are fine)
- Construction paper and poster markers

**Instructions:**
1. Explain the differences between recyclable materials, trash, and compost. Ask the children why it is important to sort our waste and preserve natural resources.
2. Separate the children into five equally sized groups. Each group should create a label, using the construction paper and poster markers, for the five containers: plastic, aluminum, glass, trash, and compost.
3. Once the containers are labeled, each group receives a pile of mixed objects, containing recyclable materials, trash, and compost. Place the five containers opposite the groups of students and perform a waste-sorting relay race. The first team to finish sorting their waste wins a prize!
Fruit Sushi

Makes 10 servings.

Time Needed: 10 minutes

Ingredients:
- 1/2 of a medium cantaloupe
- 2 small cucumbers
- 2 banana
- Fruit leather (found in the produce section)
- Shredded coconut (optional)

Utensils:
- Vegetable Peeler
- Toothpicks

Instructions:
1. Cut chunks of cantaloupe and banana.
2. Use vegetable peeler to peel long thin slices of cucumber.
3. Wrap cucumber slices around cantaloupe and secure with toothpick.
4. Wrap fruit leather around the chunks of banana and secure with a toothpick.
5. Sprinkle with coconut.

COMPLETE THE MEAL:
Serve with brown (whole grain) rice cakes.

Adapted with permission from Super Healthy Kids.
Soil Layers and Erosion

Soil covers a lot of the Earth’s surface area. It provides a home for many species and a source of nutrients for plants. Soil is made up of organic matter, air, water, and minerals.

Soil consists of different simplified layers:
- **Humus**: organic matter (plant debris that has not yet fully decomposed)
- **Surface Soil**: high organic matter accumulation and “soil life”
- **Subsoil**: iron, clay, aluminum, and organic compounds
- **Bedrock**: layer of large rocks

**Time Needed:** 1 hour

**Materials:**
- Pebbles (representing bedrock)
- Sand (representing subsoil)
- Topsoil or finished compost (representing surface soil)
- Dead leaves (representing humus)
- Reusable trays or baking pans
- Cups and water
- Textbooks or other items to prop up the trays
- Potted plant (optional)
- Seeds or seedlings (optional)
- Construction paper, scissors, markers

**Instructions:**
1. Define the following terms listed above, in addition to:
   - **Organic Matter**: comes from plants and animals.
   - **Erosion**: the process by which soil is removed from the Earth’s surface.
2. Explain the order of the layers in soil and use a soil core, if possible. Divide the students into small groups. Each group should have at least three people. Each group should fill a tray or baking pan with layers of pebbles, sand, topsoil, and leaves. The students can create a diagram with the construction paper, scissors, and markers to explain their soil layers. One end of the tray should then be propped up on a stack of books. Instruct the students to pour small amounts of water at the top of their trays. What is happening? Is the soil moving? What about the pebbles?
3. Then instruct the students to pour larger amounts of water at the top of their trays. What is happening now? Ask the students what would happen to the soil layers if trees and other plants were cut down. Where does organic matter come from?
Vegetable Wraps

Makes 10 servings.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Ingredients:
- 10 flour tortillas
- 1 cup diced green and red pepper
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 1 cup diced raw broccoli
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 cup hummus

Instructions:
1. Help the children spread hummus on their tortillas using a butter knife.
2. Fill the tortillas with vegetables.
3. Show the children how to wrap their tortillas like burritos so the vegetables stay inside.

COMPLETE THE MEAL:
Serve with a piece of fruit and milk.
Worm Composting in a Tennis Ball Can

Plants need healthy soil, enough sunshine, clean water, and air to grow healthy and strong. Nature has her own way of creating healthy, nutrient-rich soil: worms! Worms eat decaying organic matter and turn it into wonderful compost for your garden. In this activity children will create their own miniature compost bins to take home.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials: (per team of 3-4 children)
- Tennis ball can (or other recycled container that is clear and of a similar size)
- Newspaper (2 sheets per child)
- Soil
- Red wriggler composting worms (Tip: you can purchase these online. 500 worms will cost around $15.00)
- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Hammer and nail or utility knife

Tip: Each container will need holes in it to allow oxygen to flow into the container for the worms. If possible, put holes in the lids and the top of the column in advance to save time and eliminate the need to use a hammer around the children.

Instructions:
1. Start by asking children what plants need to grow strong and healthy. Collect responses including soil, water, air, and sunlight. Tell them that today we will focus on soil that plants need and learn one way we can help make healthy soil for our gardens and potted plants.
2. Poke holes in the top of the can and at a few places around the column. The holes must be small or the worms will escape through them.
3. Prepare the newspaper bedding for the column by shredding the paper into ½-centimeter strips.
4. Fluff the strips well, then moisten them with about ½ cup water until they are like a moist sponge. Mix strips with a handful of soil. Fill the column about 2/3 full with the bedding.
5. Add about 10 worms, and place some chopped, moist waste scraps 1 to 2 centimeters deep in the newspaper bedding.
6. Put the lid on the container and tape a dark piece of paper around the column to keep the worms in the dark where they are happiest.
7. Make sure the worms have eaten all their food before you add new scraps. Keep the bedding moist by spritzing with water if it becomes dry.
Storytime

Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth
by Mary McKenna Siddals

From eggshells to wiggly worms, this delightful recipe in bouncy verse features items—some familiar and some not so—that are fit for the home compost bin and will nourish Mother Earth. Vibrant collage illustrations use recycled and found materials to further a timely message. And to keep young environmental chefs fully informed about composting do’s and don’ts, there’s a note in the back about what’s not fit for the bin.

The Cloud Spinner
by Michael Catchpool

One small boy has a special gift—he can weave cloth from the clouds: gold in the early morning with the rising sun, white in the afternoon, and crimson in the evening. He spins just enough cloth for a warm scarf. But when the king sees the boy’s magnificent cloth, he demands cloaks and gowns galore. "It would not be wise," the boy protests. "Your majesty does not need them!" But spin he must—and soon the world around him begins to change.
Rainy Day Option: Recycled Sculpture

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Materials:
- Recyclable items (see examples below)
- Tape, glue, scissors, paint

Instructions:
1. Collect recycled items like empty plastic bottles, aluminum cans, tin foil, plastic fruit and vegetable containers, old lids, newspapers, cardboard, and scraps of cloth. Divide items equally into two piles. Each pile should have a similar variety of items.
2. Divide the group of children into two and challenge the two groups to create a sculpture with only those materials and basic craft supplies like tape, glue, scissors, and paint. At the end of the allotted time, allow both groups to present their creations.