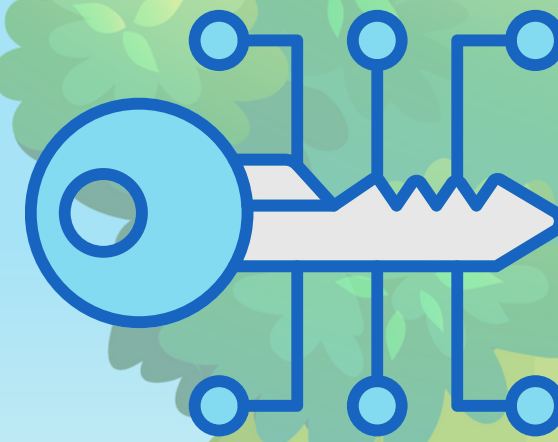


# MEET OUR DECOMPOSERS



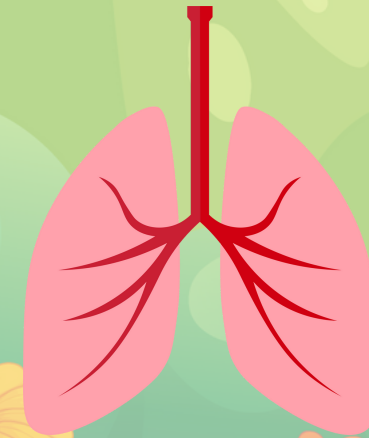


# DECODER



**A MAGNIFYING GLASS ON  
THE PAGE MEANS YOU WILL NEED TO USE THE  
MAGNIFYING GLASS TO SEE THAT CRITTER.**

**LUNGS MEAN THAT , THAT CRITTERS MAIN  
JOB IS TO HELP AERATE THE SOIL.**



**CHOMP MEANS THE CRITTERS MAIN  
JOB IS TO BREAK DOWN THE FOOD  
INTO SMALLER PIECES**

**THIS BADGE IS FOR CRITTERS WHO  
HELP KEEP THE BAD BUGS AWAY**





# RED WIGGLER

STAR OF THE SHOW

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE TRANSFORM DECAYING FOOD AND PLANT MATERIAL INTO AN EXCELLENT SOIL AMENDMENT AND CONDITIONER CALLED VERMICOMPOST.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT RED WIGGLERS

- HAVE 5 HEARTS
- BREATHE THROUGH THEIR SKIN
- DON'T HAVE LUNGS, EYES OR EARS
- SENSE LIGHT AND VIBRATIONS
- DON'T HAVE BONES
- MAKE NUTRITIOUS WORM CASTINGS (WORM POOP)





# CENTIPEDE

**BYE!**



## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE DON'T ACTUALLY HELP AT ALL. WE ARE NOT WORM FRIENDLY AND CAN HUNT AND KILL THE WORMS. WE ARE THE BAD GUY IN THIS COMPOST STORY!

## FUN FACTS ABOUT CENTIPEDES

- NOT WORM FRIENDLY - MUST REHOME
- NEVER HAVE 100 LEGS
- CAN REGROW THEIR LEGS
- MOST ACTIVE AT NIGHT
- HUNT THEIR PREY
- JAWS NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO PUNCTURE HUMAN SKIN





# SOW BUG

**Chomp**

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE ASSIST IN BREAKING DOWN VEGETABLE MATTER INTO SMALLER FRAGMENTS, WHICH AIDS IN DECOMPOSITION

## FUN FACTS ABOUT SOW BUGS

- ONLY EARTH CRUSTACEAN
- RELATED TO THE SHRIMP & LOBSTER
- DO NOT CURL UP LIKE THEIR COUSIN THE ROLY POLY
- THEY ARE LONGER, WIDER AND MORE FLAT THAN THE ROLY POLY
- PURPLE BUGS ARE SICK WITH A VIRUS





**ROLY POLY** **Chomp**

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE ASSIST IN BREAKING DOWN VEGETABLE MATTER INTO SMALLER FRAGMENTS, WHICH AIDS IN DECOMPOSITION

### FUN FACTS ABOUT ROLY POLYS

- BREATHE THROUGH GILLS
- DON'T PEE
- CAN DRINK WITH THEIR BUTT
- CURL INTO A BALL WHEN THREATENED
- BLOOD IS BLUE
- NOT A BUG BUT A CRUSTACEAN





A large millipede is curled into a tight ball on a compost pile. The millipede has a brown body with many pairs of dark legs. The compost pile is dark brown and textured. The background shows green trees and foliage.

# MILLIPEDE

## Chomp

# 2000

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE BREAK DOWN ORGANIC MATTER AND CREATE TUNNELS THROUGH WHICH MICROBES CAN READILY MOVE AROUND THE PILE.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT MILLIPEDES

- WORM FRIENDLY
- BABY MILLIPEDES ONLY HAVE 3 SETS OF LEGS WHEN THEY ARE BORN
- MILLIPEDES CAN GROW AS MANY AS 200 SETS OF LEGS
- THEY DO NOT HAVE 1000 LEGS
- NOT AN INSECT THEY ARE DIPLOPADA
- TO PROTECT THEMSELVES THEY CURL UP IN A TIGHT BALL





# MITES

# Chomp

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

**WE BREAK DOWN ORGANIC MATTER.**

### **FUN FACTS ABOUT MITES**

- FEED ON ROTTING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
- LOVE MELONS ESPECIALLY WATERMELON
- VERY SLOW MOVING
- SOMETIMES THEY HITCH RIDES ON FASTER MOVING CRITTERS LIKE SOW BUGS





# SLUGS

**Chomp**

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

**WE ARE EXPERTS AT BREAKING DOWN ORGANIC MATTER, THUS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROCESS OF DECOMPOSITION.**

### **FUN FACTS ABOUT SLUGS**

- **SLUGS CAN ABSORB OXYGEN DIRECTLY FROM THE ATMOSPHERE**
- **HAVE A BLOWHOLE**
- **HAVE THOUSANDS OF TEETH**
- **SLUG SLIME IS A LIQUID CRYSTAL**
- **THE SLUG IS THE MASCOT AT UC SANTA CRUZ**
- **LARGEST SLUG WEIGHS UP TO 30 LBS**





# SNAILS

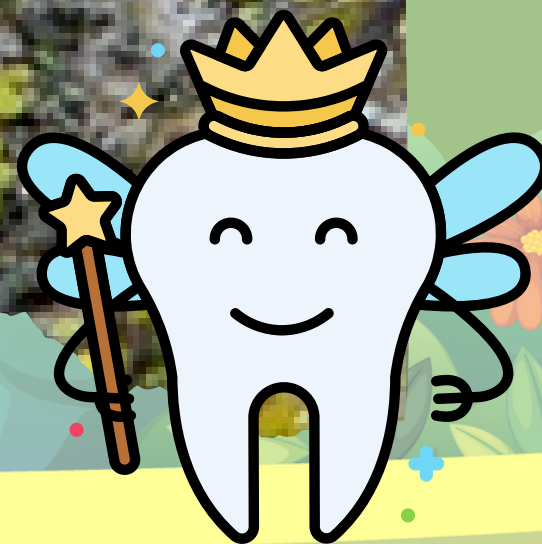
**CHOMP**

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE ARE EXPERTS AT BREAKING DOWN ORGANIC MATTER, THUS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROCESS OF DECOMPOSITION.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT SNAILS

- CAN LIVE 2-5 YEARS
- CAN HAVE 20,000 TEETH
- ARE BORN WITH SHELLS
- SNAIL SLIME IS OFTEN USED IN MAKEUP AND CREAMS BECAUSE IT IS KNOWN TO SOFTEN AND RELAX SKIN





# EARWIG

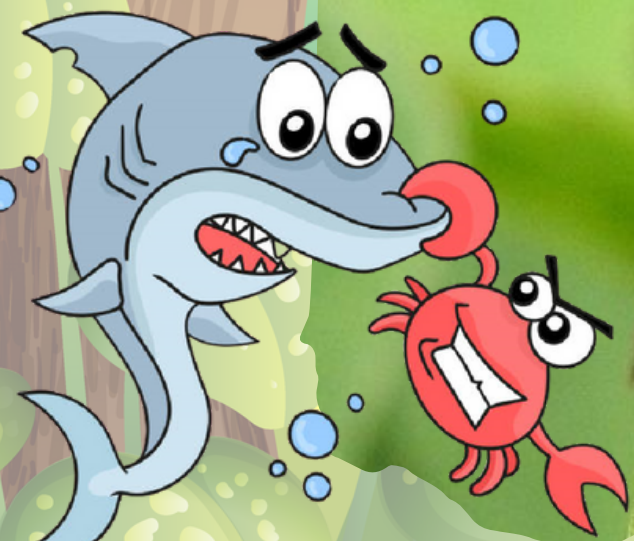


## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE EAT NUISANCES LIKE APHIDS, MITES, AND UNDESIRABLE NEMATODES, AS WELL AS OTHER INSECT LARVAE.

### FUN FACTS ABOUT EARWIGS

- DON'T ACTUALLY LIKE YOUR EARS
- HAVE WINGS BUT DON'T EVER USE THEM
- EAT BAD BUGS SO DON'T KILL THEM UNLESS YOU OWN A VINEYARD. THEY ARE BAD FOR WINE GRAPES.
- CHICKENS THINK THEY ARE A TASTY TREAT
- CAN'T ACTUALLY PINCH THROUGH HUMAN SKIN
- CAN BE UP TO 3 INCHES LONG





A photograph of numerous small, white, segmented springtails crawling on a patch of green moss. A magnifying glass with a red handle and a yellow frame is positioned over the word 'SPRINGTAILS'.

# SPRINGTAILS

## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

**WE FEED ONLY ON ROTTING ORGANIC MATTER, AIDING THE COMPOSTING PROCESS, HELPING TO RETAIN NITROGEN AND EVEN KEEPING FUNGAL DISEASE IN CHECK.**

## **FUN FACTS ABOUT SPRINGTAILS**

- ARE HEXAPODS
- DO NOT HAVE WINGS SO THEY
- CAN NOT FLY BUT CAN JUMP UP TO 8"
- ARE OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR FLEAS
- DIE IN A DROUGHT BECAUSE THEY NEED THE WATER TO LIVE ARE MOST ACTIVE IN THE AFTERNOON AND AT NIGHT





# POT WORMS



## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

IN SMALL QUANTITIES WE HELP TO AERATE THE SOIL. IN LARGE QUANTITIES WE CAN SIGNIFY THAT THE SOIL IS TOO ACIDIC WHICH IS A CONDITION THAT RED WIGGLERS DO NOT LIKE.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT POT WORMS

- HELP AERATE THE SOIL
- ONLY SURVIVE IN A REALLY WET ENVIRONMENTS
- ASSIST RED WIGGLERS IN DECOMPOSING ORGANICS
- LIKE A HELPER WORM
- HELP BY ABSORBING NITROGEN OUT OF THE COMPOST



# WORM COCOON



## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

WE ARE BABY WORMS.  
WE KEEP THE POPULATION EXPANDING.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT WORM COCOONS

- LOOK LIKE TINY POPCORN KERNELS
- UP TO 20 TINY EGGS ARE INSIDE THE COCOONS
- EACH EGG HATCHES 2-4 BABY WORMS
- IT TAKES 23 DAYS FOR BABY WORMS TO HATCH
- EGGS CAN FREEZE AND THEY WILL WAIT UNTIL IT IS WARMER TO HATCH



# ANTS



## HOW WE HELP IN THE COMPOST PILE...

**WE HAVE NO PURPOSE IN THE COMPOST BIN.  
WE ARE JUST HERE FOR THE FREE FOOD!**

## FUN FACTS ABOUT ANTS

- THEY DON'T HAVE EARS
- CAN LIFT 10-50X THEIR BODY WEIGHT
- ARE THE LONGEST LIVING INSECT
- THEY ALL HAVE SPECIFIC JOBS
- THEY DON'T HAVE LUNGS
- THERE ARE 12,000 DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANTS ON EARTH



# TAKING CARE OF OUR CRITTER FRIENDS



- **BE VERY GENTLE. THESE ARE  
LIVE CRITTERS.**
- **KEEP THE CRITTERS OVER THE BOX**
- **NOTHING IN THESE BOXES WILL HURT YOU!**
- **TURN THINGS OVER**
- **LOOK WITH THE MAGNIFYING GLASSES**
- **ASK QUESTIONS**
- **HAVE FUN!**
- **EXPLORE!**