

Leaf litter search



ZERO WASTE
ACTIVITY



What can we learn?
a) Waste is a modern
human product

This is an outside hunt activity to collect samples of organic material from a bush area showing the various stages of decomposition. It demonstrates that there is no waste in nature – Papatūānuku and Tānemahuta have very effective recycling stations!

Preparation

Locate a suitable bush area or grove of trees with lots of rotted material to investigate. Arrange a class walk or visit to the area.

Method

1. Carefully examine the surface layer of leaves. Note their condition and any bugs or animals living there. What does this layer feel like (hot, cool, moist, dry)?
2. Do the same in the next layer down. Are the leaves still intact? Can you see anything eating them? What does this layer feel like?
3. Scrape away another layer. In what condition is the leaf material here? What does this layer feel like?
4. Working together in groups, find one type of organic material with as many stages of decay as possible – for example, a fresh leaf through to a skeleton. Collect samples of each stage to take back to the classroom. Return remaining material back to the original areas and leave them as undisturbed as possible.
5. Set up an observation station with magnifying glasses and draw each stage.
6. Mix the stages up and challenge other groups to rearrange in the correct order.



Burnham students explore the leaf litter for insects, Canterbury

Reflection/ Pūmahara

How does nature take care of its organic waste? What creatures play a role in breaking down waste?

Where did you find the most decomposition was happening?

What were the conditions like there? (Warm, wet, cool etc.)

What do you think happens to the broken down organic matter?

What does organic waste look like in the realms of Tānemahuta, Haumietiketike, Rongomātāne, and Tangaroa?

How do they compare?

