Create your own Eden Glossary

Aerobic A word that means "requiring air", usually referring to oxygen.

Anaerobic A word that means “without air”, usually referring to without oxygen.

Beneficial Micro-organisms These are helpful bacteria needed to help maintain a healthy balance in decomposition processes.

Biodegradable A word that means being able to break down / decay, through the action of living organisms, into non-harmful components which are beneficial to the environment.

Bokashi This word means ‘fermented organic matter’ and refers to a system developed in Japan. It is an anaerobic process that is followed by aerobic composting. It is a method that uses beneficial micro-organisms to ferment organic matter anaerobically in a sealed container (followed by traditional composting or burying directly into the soil) to produce a solid and liquid soil conditioner.

Brown material This is material that is typically dry such as paper, leaves, sawdust, or wood ash, which is used in composting to provide carbon matter, increase oxygen levels and provide pathways for composting bugs.

Carbon This is a naturally occurring substance which is contained in all plants and animals. It combines with oxygen to make carbon dioxide, the latter which is the product of human breathing needed by all plants to survive.

Compact This means pressed together or compressed, with the result of reducing oxygen content and taking up less space.

Compost This material results from organic matter decomposing. It adds nutrients, minerals and beneficial soil organisms to the soil, improving soil composition and structure.

Compost-Zing This is a fermented wheat-bran mixture containing effective micro-organisms (EMs). It is used in a bokashi system to ferment (pickle) the food in order to speed up decomposition.

Compostable material This is organic material that can be composted, such as fruit and vegetable food scraps, paper towels, thin cardboard, non waxy paper, coffee grinds and tea bags, grass clippings and garden trimmings.

Composting This is an aerobic process which mimics nature by ‘recycling’ organic material. Organic material is broken down by bacteria, fungi and other beneficial insects and micro-organisms. Aerobic composting enables us to recover the nutrients from nitrogen-containing food scraps and garden waste (green waste) and from carbon-containing dried leaves, sawdust, hay, and paper (brown waste).

Decompose This is the natural decaying process of organic matter which is broken down by the chemical or bacterial action of micro-organisms.

Degradable This means being able to be broken down through chemical decomposition, e.g. plastics degrading in sunlight.

Eco system This refers to all the living things in an area and the way they affect each other and the environment.

Environment This is the air, water and land in or on which people, animals and plants live.

Fermentation This means to change chemically through the action of living substances, such as yeast or bacteria.

Fertiliser This is a natural or chemical substance which is spread on the land or given to plants, to make plants grow well.

Green material This is material that is typically wet, such as fruit and vegetable food waste, grass cuttings, or fresh leaves. It decomposes easily and is used in composting to provide nitrogen matter.

Greenhouse gases Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are trace gases such as methane and ammonia that control energy flows in the Earth's atmosphere by absorbing infra-red radiation. They are attributed to climate change and global warming.

Humus This is rich earth made of organic material such as decayed leaves and plants. It is usually found on the ground in a bush environment and is the product of natural plant loss.

Landfill This is essentially a hole in the ground that has been specially designed for the final disposal of solid waste. The base is lined so contamination of the land is minimal and it is covered to prevent smell and the spread of disease and unwanted pests (such as birds and rodents). Landfills were previously called rubbish tips/dumps.

Leachate This is a harmful liquid produced by rubbish in a landfill that can drain into the soil or underground water system. It causes water pollution, adversely affecting plant and animal life.

Methane gas This is a greenhouse gas produced by landfills as organic matter decomposes.

Nitrogen This is a gas with no colour or taste which forms about 78% of the Earth's atmosphere and is present in all living things.

Omnivore This is an animal naturally able to eat both plants and other animals.

Organic material/matter This is the biotic material from a plant or an animal that was once alive. It can be broken down through decomposition. Examples include food scraps, garden trimmings, paper and cardboard, dust and hair.

Organic waste This is organic matter that is disposed of as waste material. Organic material is a valuable resource and should not be considered as waste (also see 'Organic material/matter').

Photophobic This means sensitivity to light and an aversion to sunlight or well-lit places.

Putrescible waste This is solid waste that contains organic matter capable of being decomposed by micro-organisms, often causing odours. It is commonly refered to as rotting.

The 5 R's This refers to the internationally recognised philosophy for managing waste, called the 'waste management hierarchy' or the '5 r's' – reduce, reuse, recycle, recover and residual management (landfill).

Reduce This means to use or make less of an item.

Reuse This refers to the use of a product more than once in its original form for the same or a new purpose.

Recycle This is the process of reclaiming used products and objects, transforming them into raw materials and remaking them into new and different products.

Recover This refers to regaining the materials or energy content of waste matter in a usable form without any pre-processing, such as in the recovery of nutrients through composting or the recovery of energy through burning waste.

Residual Management This is the final treatment and/or disposal of a waste material that has not been reused, recycled or recovered. It is normally disposed to a landfill.

Soil food web This is the community of organisms living all or part of their lives in the soil. It describes a complex living system in the soil that interacts with the environment, plants, animals and people. The food we eat is connected to the products we put into the soil and the effects of these products on its inhabitants.

Sustainable/Sustainability This refers to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It takes social, cultural, environmental and economic factors into consideration.

Transfer/Refuse Station This is a facility where the public can take their waste for disposal. Waste delivered to transfer stations is aggregated into large loads and then transported to a landfill.

Vermi A word that means 'worm'.

Vermicasts/worm casts/worm 'poo' This is the solid waste produced by worms. It can be diluted into a liquid fertiliser for plants or used in its solid form to enrich soil (a compost-like soil conditioner).

Vermiculture This process refers to worm farming.

Worm farming This is the aerobic process of using tiger worms in an artificial ecosystem to convert organic waste into nutrient-rich fertiliser. Worm waste (made up of worm castings and worm tea) is produced after worms digest food and paper waste. It provides beneficial nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) for the soil in order to encourage plant growth. This process is also called 'vermiculture'.

Worm tea/'worm wee' This is a liquid produced by worms. It is used as a liquid plant food called vermi-liquid which is high in minerals and nutrients.