Know Your Worms

Choose the best answer.

1. Worms like to eat
- a. plastic.
- b. grass clippings.
- c. aluminum cans.

2. Waste from worms is called
- a. compost.
- b. castings.
- c. food.

3. Earthworms like to live in
- a. subsoil.
- b. topsoil.
- c. jars.

4. Worms like their home
- a. hot.
- b. cold.
- c. cool and moist.

5. Worms breathe through their
- a. lungs.
- b. gills.
- c. skin.

6. Earth worms make
- a. burrows in the soil.
- b. little houses.
- c. caves in rocks.

True or False?

Choose "T" for True or "F" for False for each statement.

1. Worms eat plastic. T / F
2. Compost helps soil to be healthy. T / F
3. Earthworms live in water. T / F
4. Worms like to eat organic matter. T / F
5. Worms are great recyclers. T / F
6. Worms like bright light. T / F
7. Nutrients are good for plants. T / F
8. Earthworms are not important to other creatures. T / F
9. Plants need nutrients to grow and be healthy. T / F
10. Plants like worm castings (excrements). T / F

Know Your Worms
1. (b); 2. (b); 3. (b); 4. (c); 5. (c); 6. (a).
True or False
1. (F); 2. (T); 3. (F); 4. (T); 5. (T); 6. (F); 7. (T), 8. (F); 9. (T); 10. (T).

NRCS South Dakota March 2007

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

S.K. Worm Answers Your Questions About Soil and Stuff!

Hello, worm lovers and soil supporters!

It is I, S.K. Worm.

The S.K. stands for "*Scientific Knowledge*."
But you can call me *SK Worm*.

I am the official annelid (worm) of the

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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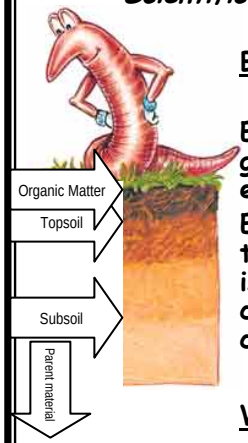
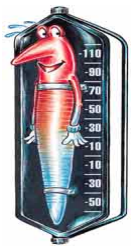


Believe it or not, earthworms eat dead stuff.

Earthworms are one of the most important groups of organisms that live in the soil ecosystem. They recycle nutrients.

Earthworms feed on organic matter, then, turn that into food for plants. Organic matter is the "dead stuff" that decomposes, or composts, on the soil surface…like grass clippings, leaves, dead creatures….yum-yum!

When the soil is cool, I'm cool.



If the temperature gets too cool, I can dig deeper to find a warm place to slither and snooze. But when the temperature is too hot, I don't feel so hot. Sunlight is deadly to me because it dries out my skin. I look for a cool spot to coil up to stay cool and moist. I don't like very dry soil either because it irritates my skin. Earthworms mostly live in the topsoil, but burrow deep down in the subsoil over winter.

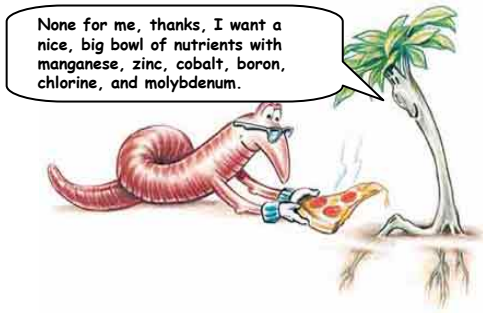
Macropores, micropores, and all sizes in between.

Earthworms burrow, or make tunnels, in the topsoil. These tunnels help nutrients (food) get to the plant roots.

When water gets into the soil, it pours into pores. Pores are spaces in the soil that come in different sizes. The bigger the pore, the more water it holds.

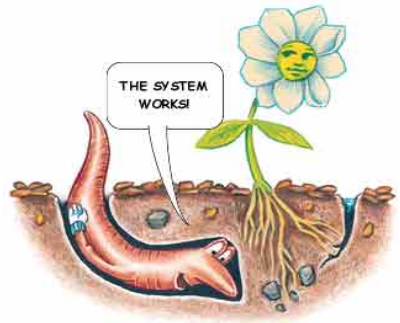
The pores strike again!

Air gets down into the topsoil and subsoil through the same pores that let in and hold water. The burrows that I and my pals dig let in air, too. That's good news for under-grounders who need air. By the way, I don't have lungs for breathing. I breathe through my skin.



Plants like to eat and drink.

Plants don't eat pizza or banana splits! Earthworms help soil to have the things that plants need to satisfy their appetites. The worm castings (excrements) are full of good food for plants. Plants have a hunger for nutrients with really strange names, like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, that you'll learn more about later in school.



The "root" of the matter.

Roots love helping others. They drain water from the soil. That keeps the soil from staying too wet. And when the soil gets too dry, roots draw up water. This water has all kinds of good stuff in it that living things need to stay healthy. Roots help make soil, too. They split rocks into pieces that later become soil.

Wind erosion? No…..Soil *conservation*!

There's soil saving going on right now! Conservation is the best way to make sure we have land on which to live and, more importantly, to grow food.

One conservation practice is windbreaks which are rows of trees planted beside fields to stop wind from blowing soil away.

The next time you're out in the country, take a look at the farmland to see all of the ways farmers keep their soil at home.