

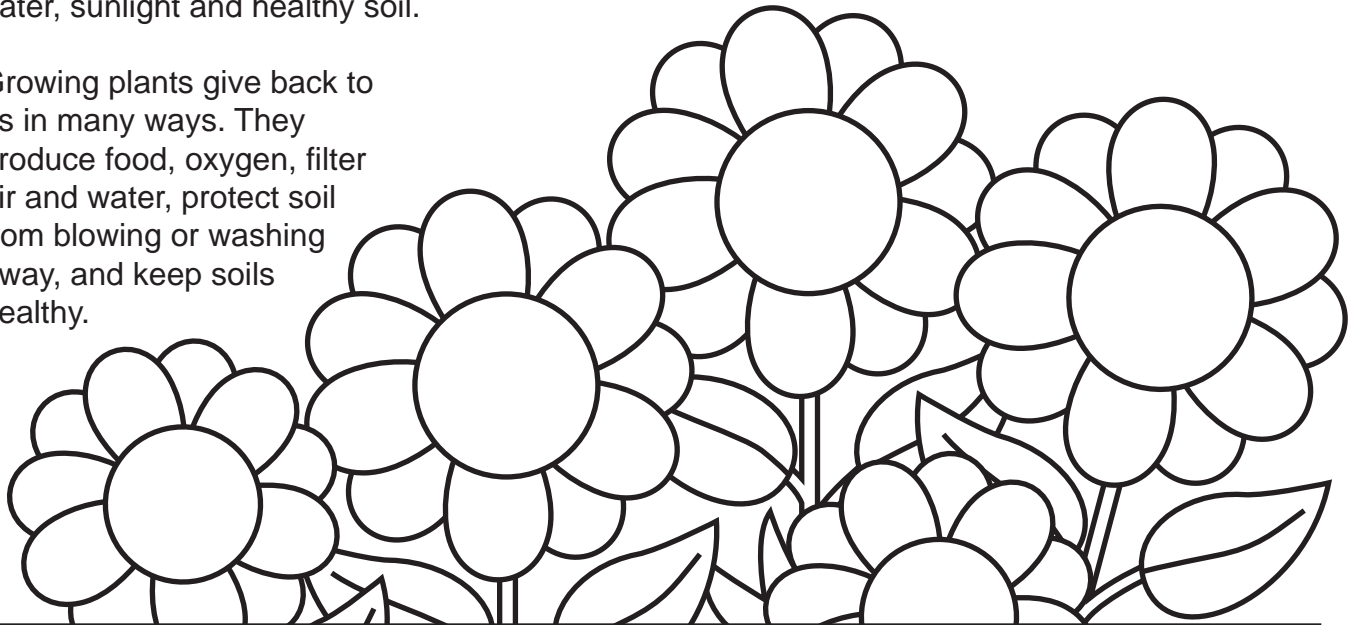
Your Food and You



Growing Plants

Do you know how the food on your plate is grown? Growing your own plants is a good way to learn about the food you eat and get tasty, local fruit and vegetables. To grow well, plants need water, sunlight and healthy soil.

Growing plants give back to us in many ways. They produce food, oxygen, filter air and water, protect soil from blowing or washing away, and keep soils healthy.



In the puzzle are words that help plants grow the food we eat.

See if you can find all these words.
Hint: Some are spelled backwards.

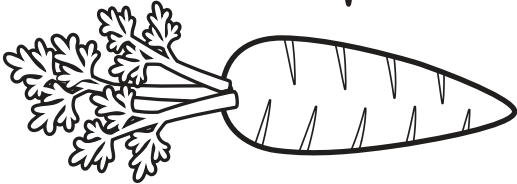
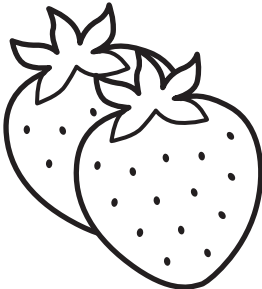
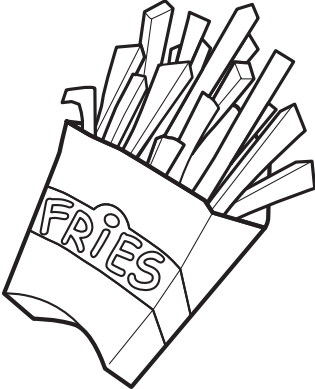
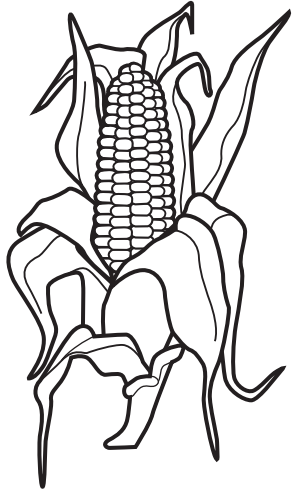
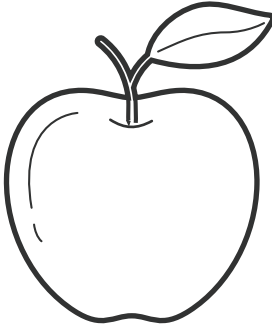
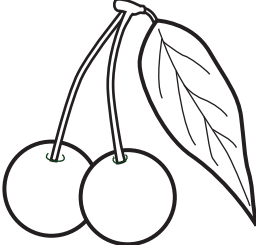
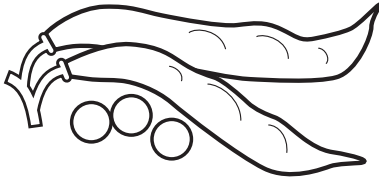
BEES
PLANTER
SUMMER
COMPOST
SEEDS
SUNLIGHT
FLOWERS
SOIL
WATER
FOOD
SPRING
WORM

R	R	U	G	K	T	W	H	Q	P	V	K	F	P	R
X	E	V	Q	C	S	D	G	B	G	H	Q	R	S	E
R	F	T	M	R	O	S	U	C	U	A	M	Z	U	M
P	V	G	A	B	P	H	R	F	L	I	O	S	N	M
D	L	F	P	W	M	S	E	E	D	S	B	F	L	U
I	N	A	M	D	O	O	F	G	W	E	G	G	I	S
C	P	R	N	M	C	Y	V	P	E	O	N	O	G	E
P	O	I	V	T	G	W	G	S	T	I	L	M	H	D
W	J	C	P	N	E	M	K	L	R	N	V	F	T	V
L	B	T	Z	C	D	R	C	P	U	L	Q	Q	F	N
M	A	D	Q	A	C	F	S	W	P	W	F	H	V	X
F	C	H	O	E	U	N	B	V	H	S	P	M	F	Y
O	U	K	N	O	K	U	V	E	A	S	B	N	S	T
O	Q	I	O	G	X	Z	W	P	H	I	Y	V	E	N
F	Y	R	M	I	H	J	G	H	B	C	D	Y	O	X

Your Food

What fruits and vegetables do you like to eat?

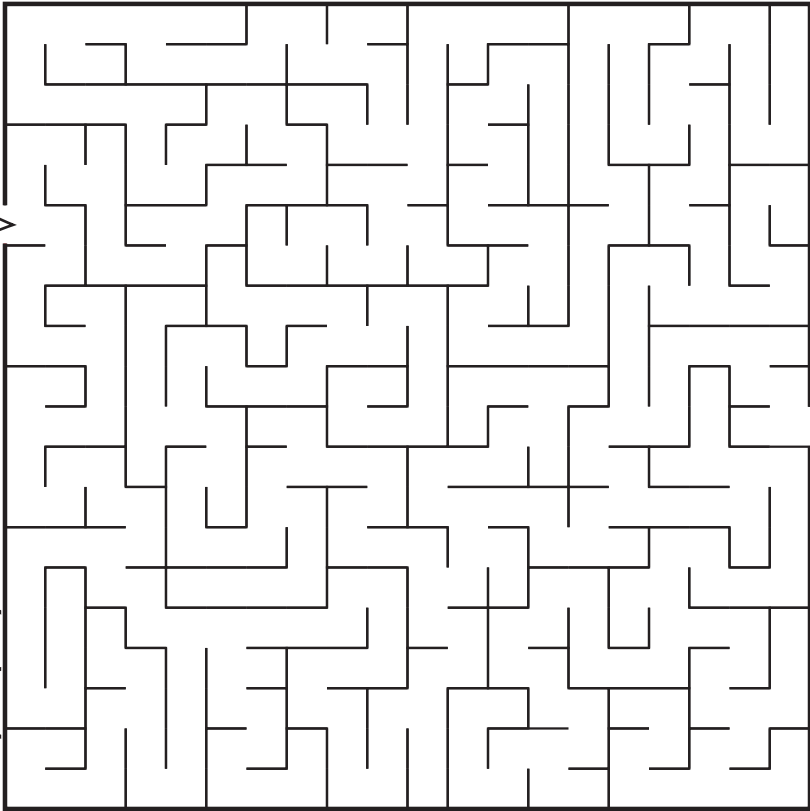
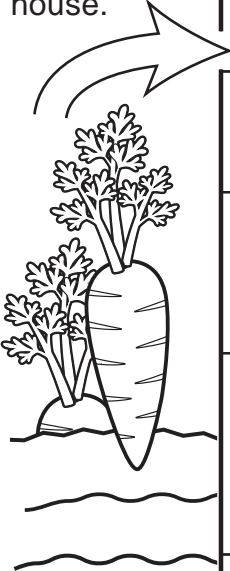
Circle your favorites.



How far does your food travel?

Fruits and vegetables travel on average 1,400 miles to your local grocery store. The longer the food is out of the ground, the less nutritious (and tasty) it is.

Find your way from the garden back to the house.



How many footsteps does it take to get a carrot from your garden to the kitchen?



Composting

What is composting?

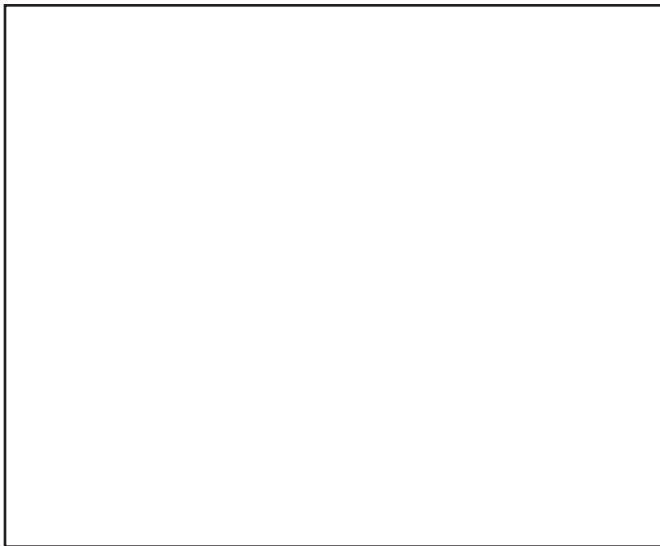
Composting is recycling things like leaves, grass, egg shells, vegetables, and fruit to form rich soil. By piling up these things, letting them break down over time, and then putting the mixture on your garden, you are creating a great place for new plants to grow!

Composting is a good way to keep kitchen waste out of the landfill and also give plants the nutrients they need to grow. All you need is a corner of the backyard and a way to collect food scraps.

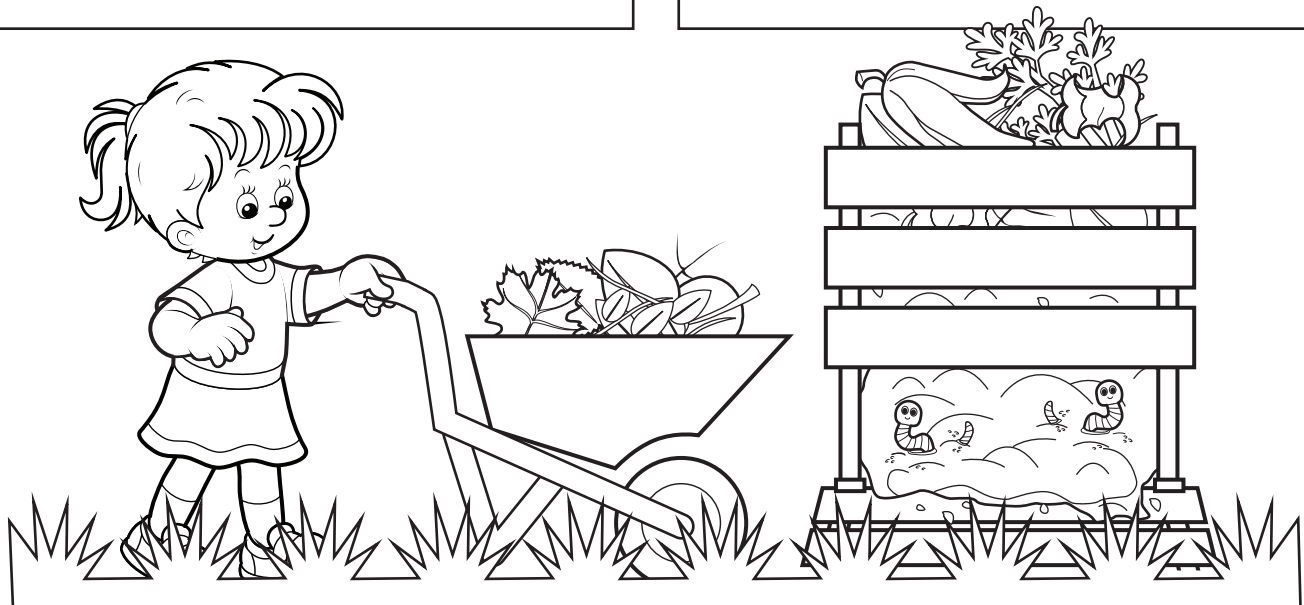
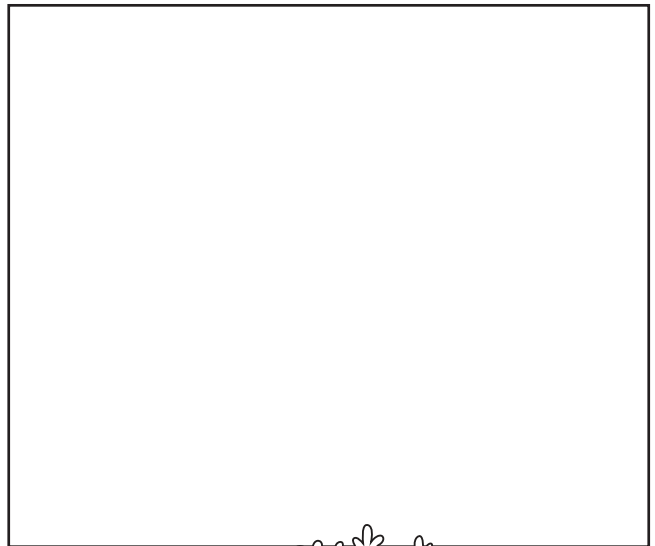
Compost is broken into two categories; green and brown. Green compost includes things that are wet or were recently growing like grass clippings, table scraps and manure. Brown compost includes older dry materials like wood chips, straw, paper, leaves and twigs.

Which items around your house would you add to your compost pile? Draw or write them in these boxes.

Green compost



Brown compost



Gardening

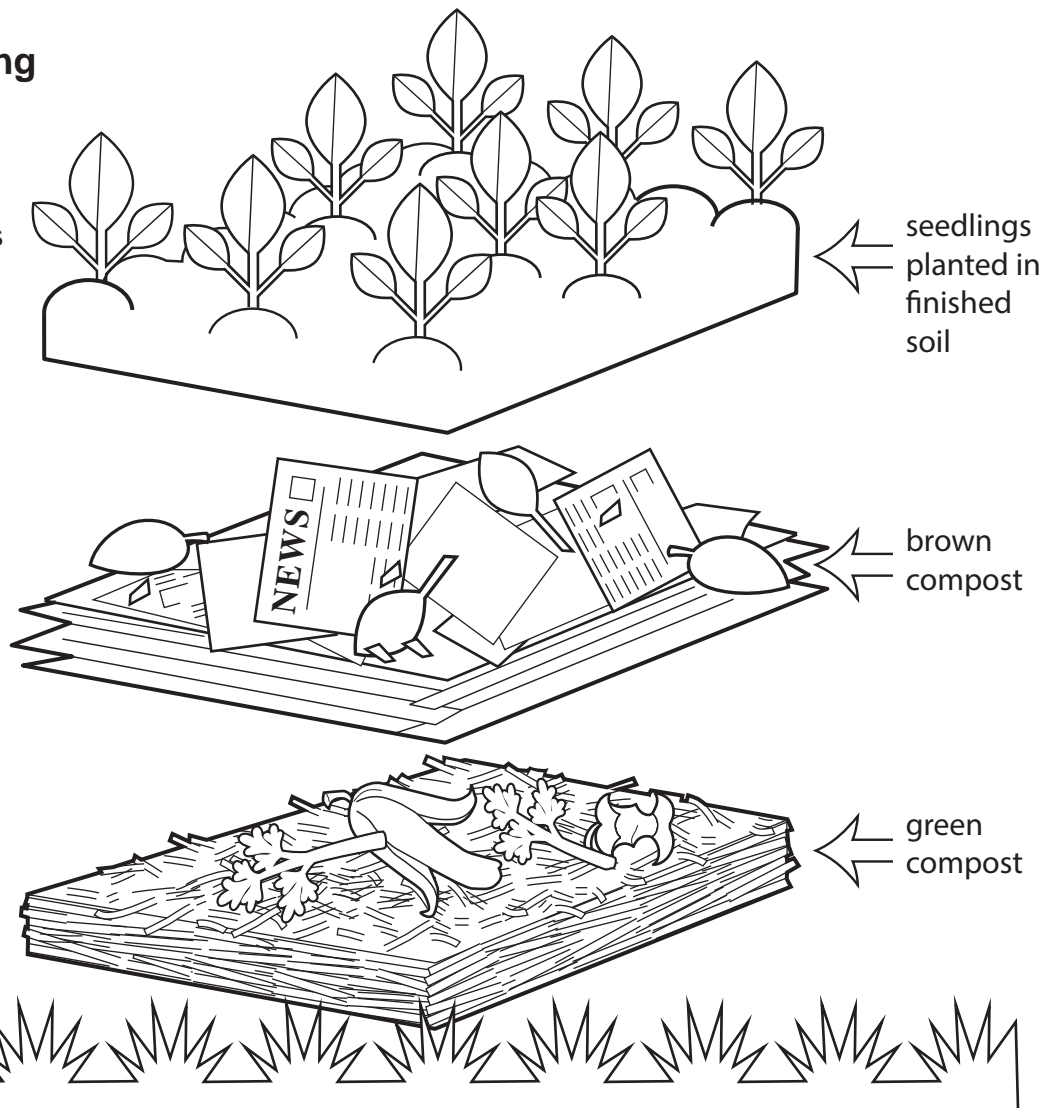
How do you start gardening? You might need to learn about what kinds of plants grow well in your area. Plants need different amounts of sunlight, water, and warm growing days. You could ask teachers, parents, or other adults for information. Or you might take a trip to your local gardening center or greenhouse to ask an expert so that you get the best seeds or seedlings to plant in your garden. Also, keep in mind the kinds of fruits and vegetables you like to eat.

Next, working with an adult, find a spot in your yard or a community garden to start planting. You may need to make that spot ready to be a garden. (Try lasagna gardening to reduce tillage.) Dig a hole or make a furrow in the soil using the directions on the seed packet or large enough to fit the seedling with its soil in the ground. Add enough water to keep the soil moist and plants green and healthy. To help plants need less added water, make sure the soil is covered with grass clippings, leaves, or straw. That way, less water evaporates into the air from the soil and stays where the plants can use it. Another way to help keep plants healthy might be adding compost to the garden.

After about two weeks, depending on the type of plant, you will start to see plants sprouting. As the plants grow and bloom, you might even see butterflies and bees in your garden.

Lasagna gardening

This method of gardening consists of layering on top of the already existing grass after the first frost. The first layer is green compost and the second layer is brown compost. (Tip: make sure to cover the green compost well to keep animals away). Come spring your soil will be ready to plant.



Scavenger Hunt

Gardening can help us be active, observe the natural world around us, and connect to the farmers and ranchers that are growing our food every day.

What did you see or feel as you grew your own food? Write or draw some of them below.

Looking around your community or even your home, see if you can find or do the things below that help grow healthy plants. Adults, can you add items or activities to these lists?

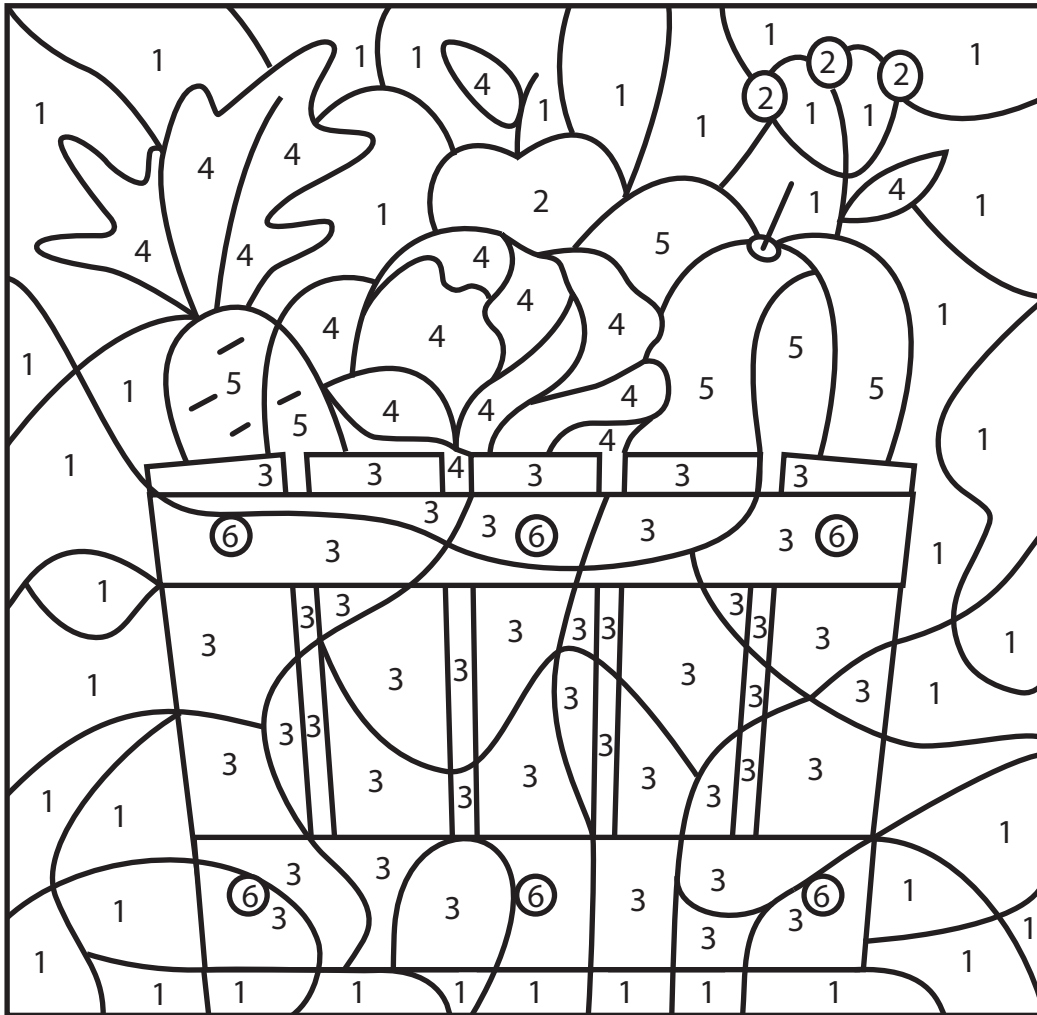
Things to find

- Pollinators such as bees
- Water source
- Birds that may visit your garden
- Plant bud that will grow a flower and then a fruit or vegetable.
- Shovel for planting
- Rake for collecting grass clippings
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Things to do

- Smell a flower
- Pull some weeds
- Plant a seed
- Collect dinner scraps or leaves for compost
- Feel the soil
- Hear the wind
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Color by Number



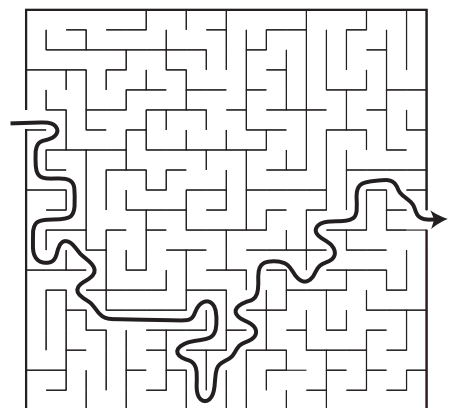
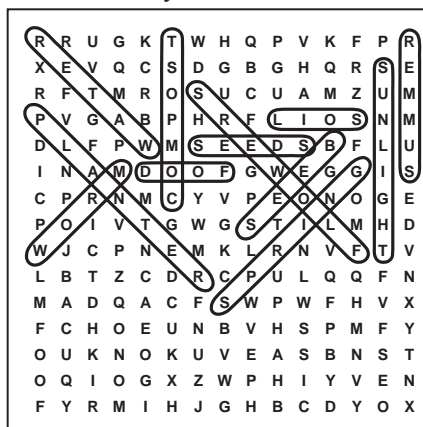
- 1 = blue
- 2 = red
- 3 = brown
- 4 = green
- 5 = orange
- 6 = gray

For more, visit the NRCS Montana Soil Health webpage at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/montana/soilhealth>.

The Gardening for Soil Health publication has many more gardening tips for producing healthy, nutritious food.



Answer Key



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.