



FALL | Soil Replenishing: Putting the Goodness Back

Summary:

During the growing season our soil works hard to keep our plants healthy and strong. As the growing season comes to an end and cooler weather approaches, we can help our soil get back some of the nutrients it gave to our plants.

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: Shovel, rake, red clover, buckwheat, and/or rye seeds

Explore: “Convergence” by Jackson Pollack: Do you see the colors in this painting anywhere else? Pollack used a technique called drip painting, dropping paint on to the canvas off the tip of his paintbrush. When we plant a cover crop, it looks a bit like this technique.

Read: *Count Down to Fall* by Fran Hawk, Illustrated by Sherry Neidigh

In the Garden:

If there is no healthy soil, there won't be healthy plants. It's as simple as that. We depend on our soil to produce food for us each year, so it is our job to make sure we give our soil the food it needs. A great time to give back to our soil is in the fall after we dig up our annuals, the plants that only grow one season, and clear the garden beds of leaves and debris.

Observations:

- How does the garden look different in fall?
- Does the soil look different than it did when we started planting in spring?
- Run your fingers through the soil. What does it feel like?

Observations:

- What do you think our soil needs?
- Do you think soil needs something different in the winter?
- How does soil eat “food?”

To help our plants grow, soil feeds the roots of our fruits and veggies nutrients; things like nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium—that nutrient we get from bananas! At the end of the growing season our soil is often depleted of these nutrients. If we were to plant again the next year, without for example putting any nitrogen into the soil, our plants next spring might grow smaller leaves or have very weak branches.

Activity:

We can put helpful nutrients into the soil by planting something called a cover crop.

1. Loosely rake the soil then broadcast the seeds over the bed gently covering them with a light dirt blanket.
2. Water and let grow. The roots of the cover crop help keep our soil from eroding, washing away, and in the spring we will turn the cover crop back into the soil to provide something called green mulch. Our soil will be healthier and our plants happier.

Beyond the Garden | Spreading the Seed Love:

You can make these seed truffles with extra seeds from your cover crop or use wildflower seeds and plant them in the spring. 5 parts clay + 3 parts compost + 1 part wildflower seeds. If mix is dry add a little water. Roll into small truffle sized balls. Place on a baking sheet and dry in the sun for 24 hours. Once dry, walk the neighborhood and toss your ball into an area that needs a little plant love.

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Info about seeds, what they grow and what they give: <http://www.seedsavers.org/>