

Meet the Decomposers: Soil's Superheroes! Look under your feet!

Decomposers do the super important "dirty work" to *recycle* food into *compost* for plant growth!



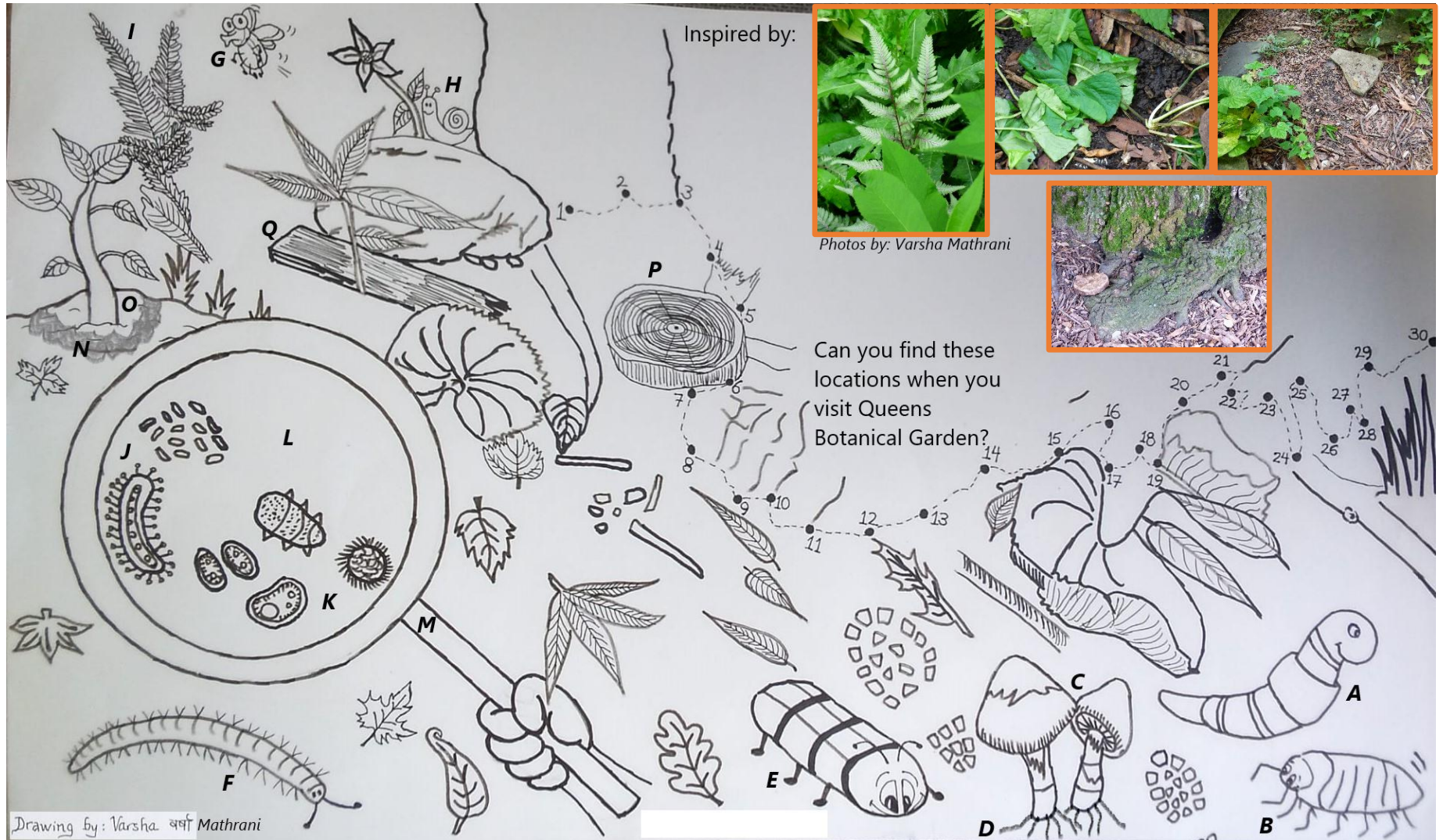
Instructions: Match the letter to the drawing (Answers on back). This drawing is inspired by the forest floor's soil life of The Fred Gerber Woodland Trail/Wetland and Woodland Garden at Queens Botanical Garden.

Macrobe: A microbial colony living as a population, life forms that are easy to see with the naked eye. You don't need a microscope.

A. Earthworm B. Roly poly/Pill bug C. Mushroom/Fungus D. Mycelium E. Beetle F. Centipede G. Fly H. Snail I. Fern

Microbe: A small life form that causes fermentation, disease, or breakdown of food scraps. They can't be seen with the naked eye. You need a microscope.

J. Bacterium (long and thin) K. Protozoan (round and oval) L. Microscopic M. Magnifying glass/lens N. Compost O. Soil P. Tree Ring Q. Wooden log



ANSWER KEY

Microscope: an instrument used to see very small things, like samples of cells, hundreds of times larger

- A. Earthworm:** a burrowing life form that lives in the soil that aerates, drains soil and buries organic matter **B. Roly poly/Pill bug:** a small insect that can roll itself into a ball for protection
C. Mushroom/Fungus (pl. Fungi): a growth that normally has a domed cap on a stalk with gills under the cap (umbrella-shaped) **D. Mycelium (pl. Mycelia):** a thin white root-like part (hyphae) of a fungus
E. Beetle: an insect with a hard cover to protect back wings and belly area **F. Centipede:** an invertebrate (no backbone) that has a flat long body with many parts, each part usually has a pair of legs
G. Fly: a small flying insect that uses one pair of wings to fly **H. Snail:** a mollusk with a spiral shell that can fit its whole body
I. Fern: a plant without flowers that has feathery parts that reproduces through spores released from under the parts
J. Bacterium (long and thin) (pl. Bacteria): a one-celled life form that has cell walls, but no organs and center; some cause disease
K. Protozoan (round and oval) (pl. Protozoa): a one-celled tiny animal from the kingdom Protista, like amoeba, flagellate, ciliate, or sporozoan
L. Microscopic: something so small to be seen only with a microscope **M. Magnifying glass/lens:** a lens to make a larger image, set in a frame with a handle and used to look at small details like fingerprints, stamps, and fine print
N. Compost: broken down organic material to add to plants for growth **O. Soil:** top layer of earth where plants grow; a black or dark brown material that has organic matter, clay, and rock particles
P. Tree Ring: part of a tree trunk where each circle in it equals one year of a tree's growth
Q. Wooden log: the trunk, stem and main wooden part of a tree are called logs when cut; small life forms hide under and live there