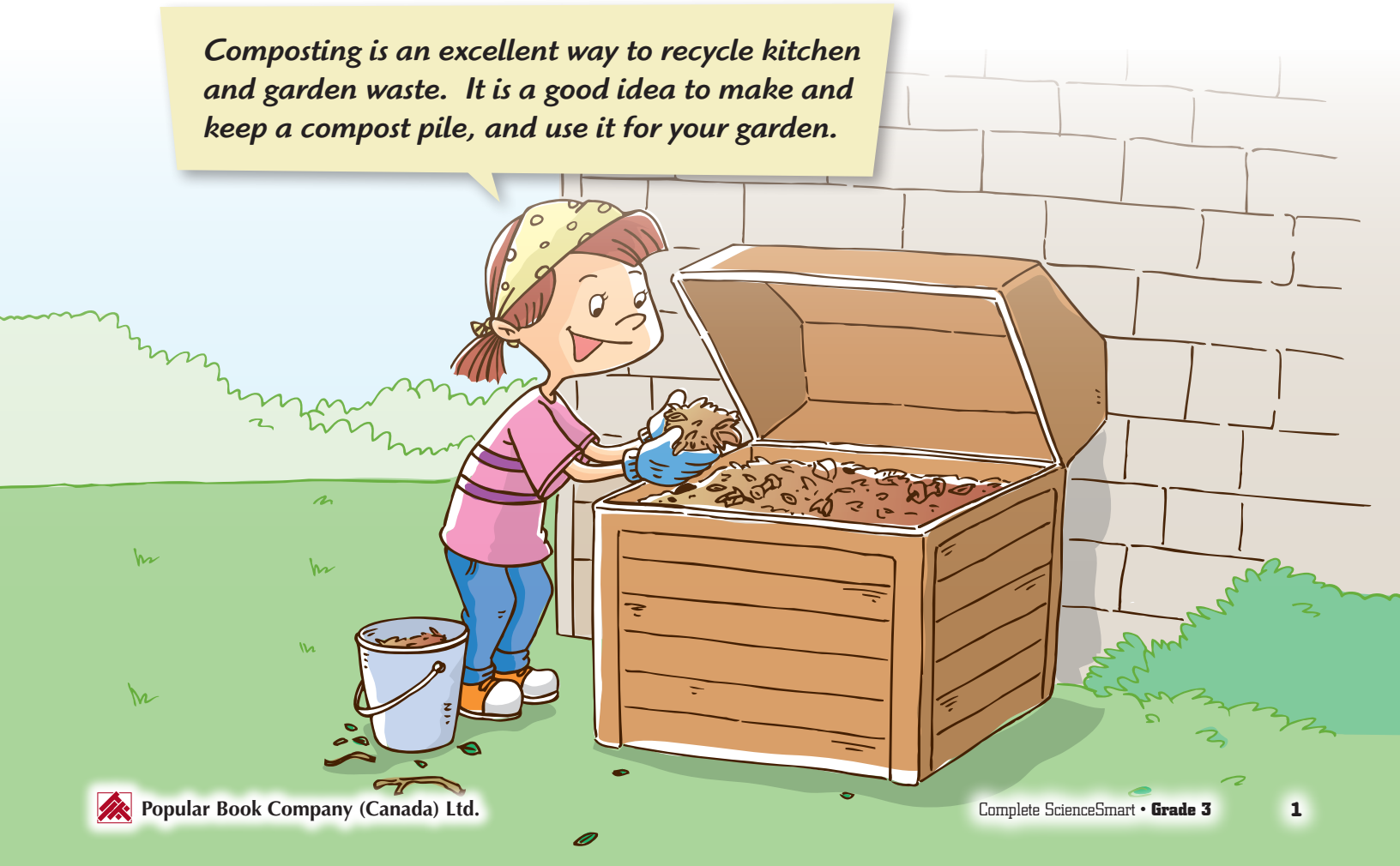
EXPLORATION 1

Making Compost

Learn how to change organic waste into useful soil.

Composting is an eco-friendly way of turning food and plant waste into nutrient-rich soil for plants. It is a great way of putting waste to good use. There are many benefits of composting.

- Composting saves water by helping the soil retain moisture.
- It is a great way of recycling organic waste and helping the environment.
- It helps put nutrients back into the soil and promotes plant growth.
- It reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.



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Try this experiment to learn how to make your own compost and how water plays an important role in composting.

Compostable Waste

Materials:

- compostable waste from your home
- 2 big plastic containers with lids
- shredded newspaper
- soil
- water
- a nail
- a long stick
- a hammer

Steps:

1. **Ask an adult to help you poke many holes in the lids and bottom of the containers with the hammer and nail.**
2. **While outside, layer shredded newspaper, waste, and soil in the containers, with a final layer of soil on top.**
3. **Add water to make the soil damp in one of the containers and mark it. Leave the other dry.**
4. **Add compostable waste into both containers and secure the lids.**
5. **Once a week, open and stir the contents in both containers. Add water to dampen the soil of the marked container.**
6. **Do this for two months and observe the results.**

The smell of food waste attracts animals. Make sure the lids are tightly secured.

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This experiment shows you that food and plant waste in soil is broken down by bacteria and other animals (decomposers) such as worms. This releases the nutrients in the waste back into the soil. The composting process produces dark, crumbly matter that can be used to fertilize garden soil.

You should have noticed that the waste in the container with water turned into soil faster. This is because moisture is needed for composting to happen.

Decomposers are organisms that break down dead plant or animal matter. They are essential for soil fertility and healthy growth of plants.