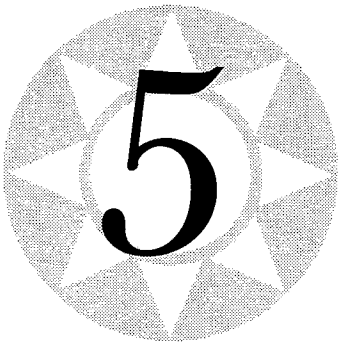
Composting



Answers to review questions

1. **Air is necessary for a compost pile to work. Why?**
   To encourage aerobic organisms *(p. 106)*

2. **What happens in a compost pile if there is no air present?**
   Without air, the compost pile kills aerobic organisms and encourages the growth of anaerobic ones. The compost pile becomes a smelly, slimy mess *(pp. 106, 108)*.

3. **A good compost pile contains a variety of raw materials. Define each of the following and give examples:**
   - *Energy materials* contain a lot of energy for microorganisms. Examples include grass clippings, manure, garden trimmings, and fruit and vegetable waste *(p. 105)*.
   - *Bulking agents* are low in nitrogen, energy, and moisture. Examples include wood chips, corn stalks, sawdust, grass hay, and straw *(p. 105)*.
   - *Balanced raw materials* contain a balance of energy and bulk. Examples include leaves, high-quality hay (ground up), ground-up tree and shrub trimmings, horse manure with bedding, and mixtures of bulking and energy materials *(p. 105)*.

4. **Why is particle size important in a compost pile?**
   Microorganisms act on the surface of the compost material; the smaller the size, the more surface area there is to act on *(p. 105)*.

5. **Why does compost need to "cure" before being applied to a garden?**
   Curing affects the availability of nitrogen and the microbial activity of compost. Uncured compost can injure plants, especially when used with potting soil or to start new seeds *(pp. 107–108)*.

6. **What are some problems with using manure in a compost pile?**
   Composting might not kill all pathogens found in manure. The greatest risk of contamination is to root crops, such as potatoes and carrots, and leafy vegetables such as lettuce *(pp. 50, 109)*.

7. **What are some kinds of manure that never should be used in a compost pile?**
   Cat, dog, and pig manure *(pp. 50, 109)*