



*Forest Floor Terrarium  
Background Information*



## *The Forest Floor*

The forest floor at first glance may seem like a calm and quiet environment, but take a few minutes to peer beneath the surface and you will observe some of the hundreds of energy and matter interactions occurring in this active habitat. Decomposers such as bacteria and fungi are busily working to break down fallen leaves and other dead plant matter. Worms, mites, pillbugs, slugs and other small consumers in turn feed on the bacteria, fungi, and partially decayed plant matter. Still larger consumers such as centipedes and beetles feed upon these smaller consumers. Over time, plant matter is cycled to the soil, air, and/or water in basic elements such as phosphorus, nitrogen, or other nutrients. These nutrients are then taken in by plants which use them as building blocks through the process of photosynthesis. In time, plants lose their leaves or die and the process begins again. So the next time you're walking through a forest, think about the world at work beneath your feet.