

## Soil Dwellers Teacher Key

### **Green station: producers (leaf litter and plant roots)**

Producers in a soil food web include green plants, lichens, photosynthetic bacteria, and algae that convert sunlight into energy using *photosynthesis*. In the soil, plants are available as decomposing organic matter, such as leaf litter or plant roots.

### **Orange station: primary consumers (bacteria, nematodes, fungi, pill bugs)**

Consumers cannot make their own food and must eat plants or animals. Herbivores are consumers that depend on plants for food, carnivores eat other living animals, and omnivores eat both plants and animals. Primary consumers in our soil ecosystem include decomposers and root feeders—bacteria, nematodes, fungi, and pill bugs.

### **Blue station: secondary consumers (potworms, nematodes, amoebas, springtails)**

Secondary consumers primarily eat the decomposers and root feeders. Potworms, nematodes, amoebas, and springtails are secondary consumers in a soil food web.

### **Red station: higher-level consumers (earthworms, nematodes, ants, pseudoscorpions, beetles, birds, centipedes, and moles)**

Higher-level consumers eat both primary and secondary consumers. Higher-level consumers in the soil food web include earthworms, nematodes, ants, pseudoscorpions, beetles, birds, centipedes, and moles.