DECOMPOSITION MODELING
Create a visual representation of what happens to plants after they die.

DETAILS
- Age: Can be adapted for any age
- Time: 20 – 60 minutes
- Materials: (optional) paper and pencil

OBJECTIVES
- CREATE and USE a model to explain decomposition to MAKE PREDICTIONS
- EXPLORE and OBSERVE an outdoor space

ACTIVITY STEPS

EXPLORATION & LEAF COLLECTION
Head to an outdoor space and spend a few minutes looking closely at what's on the ground. Ask yourself and your student questions like.

- What do you notice?
- Can you see any patterns?
- Where did these leaves/sticks come from?

Begin collecting leaves and sorting them. Make four separate piles of leaves of the following estimated ages:
- 1 week old
- 3 – 5 months old
- 1 – 3 years old
- 5+ years old

Organize your leaves and make observations! There is no one right way to organize them. If you need inspiration, see the sidebar.

USE THE MODEL
Once you've completed the model and sketch, consider how other leaves/sticks might fit into this model. Can you determine how long a leaf has been on the ground based on your model? What other information would you need?

Consider doing the same exercise in a different area. Record the different environmental factors (sunlight, moisture, slope, public area vs private, amount/species of trees around, etc.)

"Man does not weave this web of life. He is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."
- Chief Seattle