

# CONSERVATORY READER: WE'RE DIGGING DECOMPOSERS!



An early view of the Conservatory.

The Garfield Park Conservatory opened in 1908 and is one of the largest conservatories in the United States. It has 2 acres of indoor greenhouses and 10 acres of outdoor gardens. The indoor greenhouses are 8 rooms that grow mostly tropical and desert plants.

Home to venus fly traps, tall palms, and chocolate trees, the Conservatory is a place to learn and explore!



## What happens to my garbage?

Have you ever wondered what happens to garbage once it gets picked up in the garbage truck? Most of your garbage goes to a **landfill** where it is piled with other trash.



Trash is piling up at this landfill.



While this looks like a hill, we know that there is a mountain of trash underneath!

Once the landfill is full, it is covered up with a seal to keep it all in. Dirt is then piled on top. There are special holes or **vents** to let gases out.

As the trash slowly breaks down under the ground, gases come out of it. One of these gases is called **methane**. Things like metal and plastic take a really long time to break down, but things that were once alive (plant and food waste) break down in the landfill and produce methane. It is not good for the earth. Over time it can make the earth warmer.

What can we do to help the earth when it comes to our trash? Come visit the Garfield Park Conservatory to find out!

# WE'RE DIGGING DECOMPOSERS! DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

 What can you do to make sure less trash goes to the landfill?

 Can you think of anything else we can do with food we don't eat instead of throwing it in the trash?

 What ways does waste break down in nature? Can you think of any animals that help to break down the waste of other animals or plants? How could we apply some of these concepts or models to our food waste?

 What questions do you have about what happens to our waste? Remember them or write them down and ask the staff at the Conservatory!

School groups are welcome at the Conservatory Tuesday through Friday from 9 am-1 pm. For more information visit [garfieldconservatory.org/group-visits](http://garfieldconservatory.org/group-visits) or email [groups@garfieldpark.org](mailto:groups@garfieldpark.org).

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