

GO WILD IN NEW YORK CITY

LESSON PLAN/ New York City Rocks! Chapter

Conflict Resolution

The extension activity following the “Design your soil” project introduces the concept of natural versus chemical soil fertilizers. Natural fertilizers, such as compost and manure, are organic ways to add nutrients to the soil to help plants grow. Artificial fertilizers, such as *Miracle Grow*, use chemicals to enhance the soil and provide plants with the nutrients they need to grow. These two kinds of fertilizers have very different impacts on the environment, from production, to application and far beyond. Natural fertilizers are actually recycled animal and plant wastes, thus their production requires little added energy. Plus, reusing wastes cuts down on garbage production. Chemical fertilizers, while convenient for other reasons, require energy for production and may contain harmful pollutants that end up in our rivers and soils after they are applied to lawns and farmland.

Propose students to reflect about the following dilemma: “People choose chemical or natural fertilizers for many different reasons. Imagine that you and your parents are trying to decide how take care of some houseplants that don’t seem to be doing very well. You say that you learned about composting in science class and that compost is a natural fertilizer for plants. It adds nutrients that help the plants grow and doesn’t pollute the environment. You suggest that your family start a worm compost bin and use the fresh compost for the plants. Your parents would rather go to the local hardware store and buy a box of *Miracle Grow*. They say it’s more convenient—it’s easy, cheap and they don’t have much time to spend on saving the plants anyway. What do you do?”

In this activity students will work in small groups to come up with possible compromises that the family could choose to solve their conflict of interests. Students within the groups will choose roles to play—either the child or the parents—and write arguments in favor of their positions. Through role-playing the groups will hear each side of the argument and try to reach an agreement that both sides find beneficial.