

Name _____

KEY WORDS

nutrients

drought

pollinators

competition

Growing Food at Home

Nowadays, many suburban families are growing food in backyard gardens. If you take care of your garden, you will get an abundant harvest. Plants take up nutrients through their roots. Pollinators like bees and butterflies visit the flowers on vegetable plants and spread pollen from one plant to another so that the plants can set fruit. Your plants will thrive if they do not have too much competition for space and nutrients, so make sure to leave plenty of room between seeds, especially for plants like squash and tomatoes that get large. Many vegetables cannot survive a drought, so you'll have to watch your garden carefully and water your plants when needed. Earthworms aerate the soil by wriggling through it, and their droppings put nutrients back into the soil.

1. What does the word **nutrients** mean? Use a dictionary or thesaurus to help you.
2. Where do plants get nutrients? What three statements in the paragraph above act as clues?
3. What does the word **competition** mean as it relates to plants? What do plants **compete** for?
4. Why are **pollinators** important to gardeners?
5. What does the word **drought** mean? What can you give to a plant to help it survive a drought?

ANSWERS

1. Nutrients are substances that provide nourishment essential for growth and the maintenance of life.

2. Plant get nutrients from the soil.

Clues: Plants take up nutrients through their roots. Your plants will thrive if they do not have too much competition for space and nutrients. Earthworm droppings put nutrients back into the soil.

3. Plants compete for space, nutrients, light and water. They “compete” because if there are only so many of these things to go around, only the “winners” will get them and the other plants won’t do well or will die.

4. They spread pollen from flower to flower so that the plant can set fruit.

5. A long period without rainfall. You can water a plant by hand to help it survive a drought.