

# Decomposers



Due to the fact that Wisconsin's forests evolved without earthworms, these ecosystems depend upon the slow break down of organic matter to gradually release nutrients back into the soil for uptake by native plants. Healthy, undisturbed forests are typically dynamic ecosystems anchored in a very complex soil structure that teems with macro- and microscopic life. The key to health in our state's forests resides in a fungal-based soil that slowly decomposes its organic matter. A healthy layer of leaf litter, also known as duff, in a forest is woven together with threads of fungi that binds the litter to the soil.