

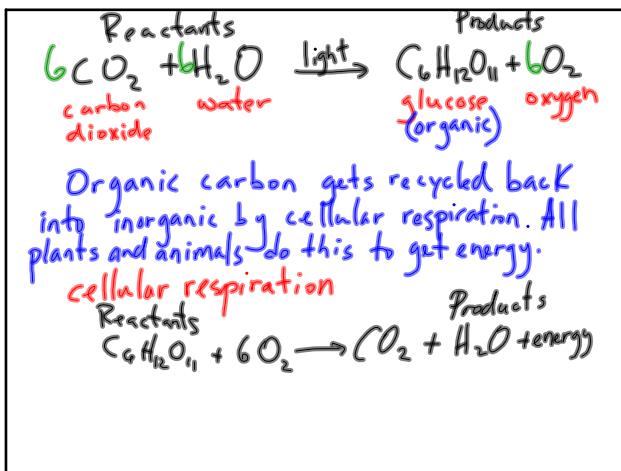
Carbon cycle

The Carbon Cycle

Carbon is the key element in living things. Carbon is found as inorganic carbon in the atmosphere and dissolved in the oceans (CO<sub>2</sub>).

Photosynthesis is the process that converts CO<sub>2</sub> (inorganic) into organic carbon.

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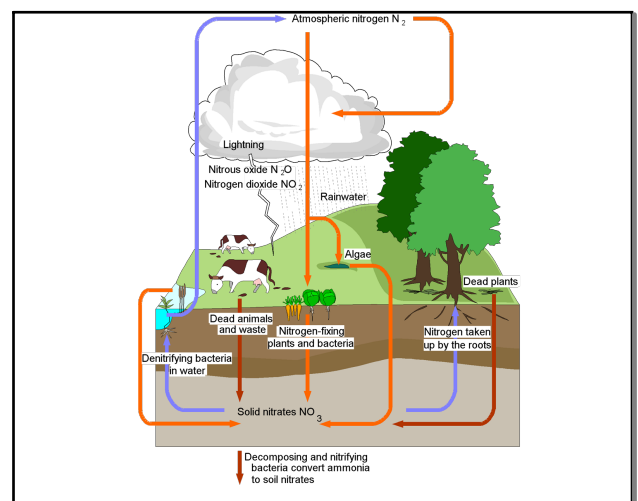
Photosynthesis and respiration are complementary processes since they cycle carbon from inorganic to organic and back.

Decomposers also cycle carbon by breaking dead organisms. If this takes a long time the organisms are converted into fossil fuels like coal, oil or natural gas.

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Carbon is locked up in fossil fuels for a very long time except when we extract and use it for combustion (burning). This is the human element of the carbon cycle.

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Nitrogen cycle