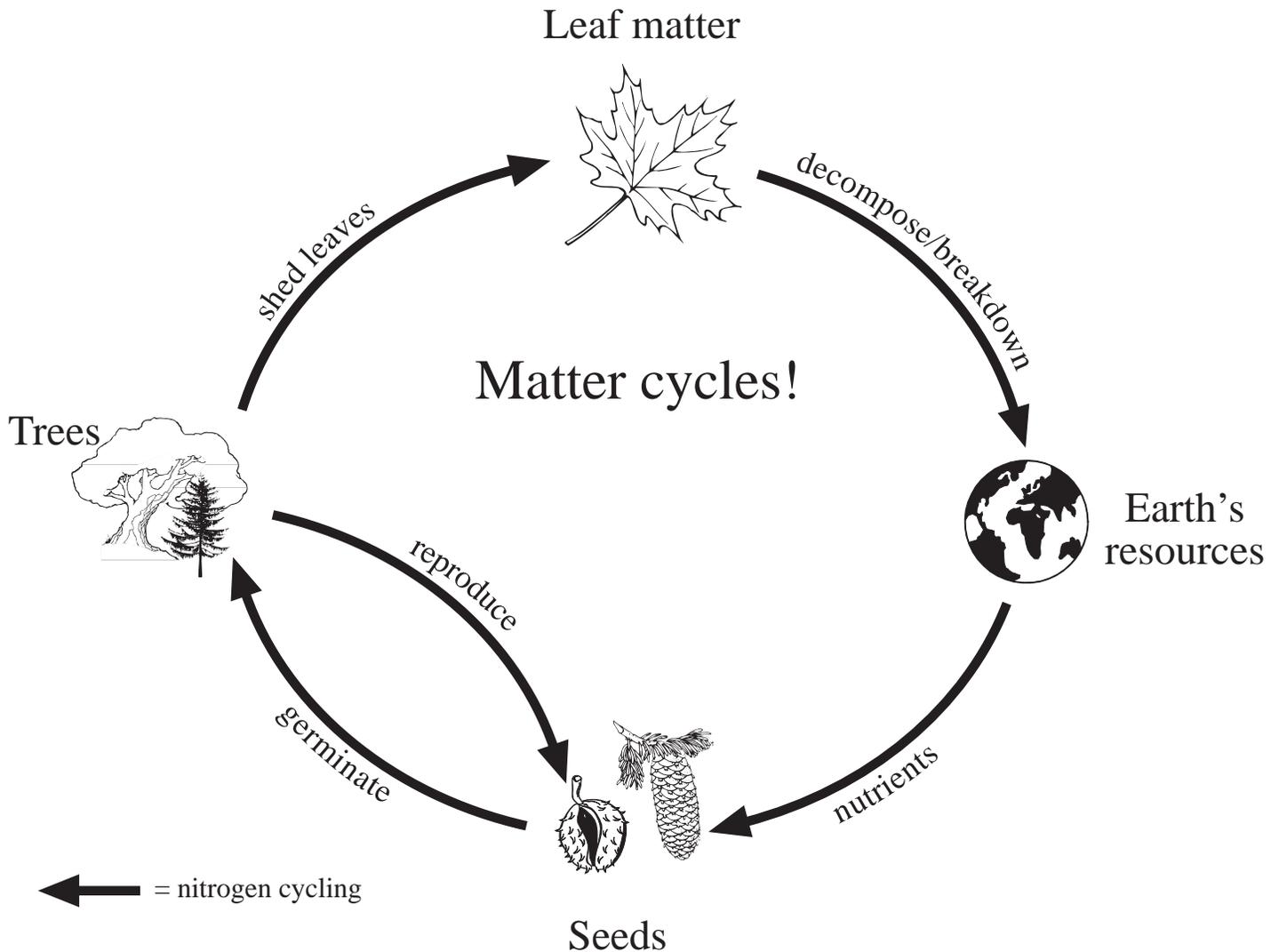




“Leaf” It in Your Yard (Composting) Nitrogen Matter Cycle



Nitrogen: a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that makes up about 4/5, or 80%, of the Earth's atmosphere. It is used by plants and animals after being converted into a compound (combined with other elements such as oxygen). Plants and animals need nitrogen in order to make proteins for growth.

The Nitrogen Cycle and Plants: The Earth's resources (soil, air, water) provide the nutrients for seed growth. *Nitrogen* (one of these nutrients) passes to seeds through the soil. Seeds germinate into plants which use *nitrogen* for growth. When adult plants reproduce, they pass *nitrogen* into seeds that will continue the cycle of plant growth. Plants such as trees may shed their leaves annually as a winter adaptation to save water. These fallen leaves with the help of bacteria, fungi, and small consumers (worms, pillbugs, millipedes, etc.) return *nitrogen* to the Earth's resources (soil, air, water) to be used again. Eventually all plants die. When this happens the plant is decomposed with the help of bacteria, fungi, and small consumers (worms, pillbugs, millipedes, etc.), and *nitrogen* once again returns to the Earth's resources (soil, air, water) where the process starts all over again.