

Part 1

Introduction

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In nature energy from sunlight, and carbon and nitrogen from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and nitrogen fixation, respectively) and their conversion into organic compounds, to extract and bring mineral nutrients from deep soil and subsoil provide the main source of energy and nutrients for soil and consequently, for the whole biosphere.

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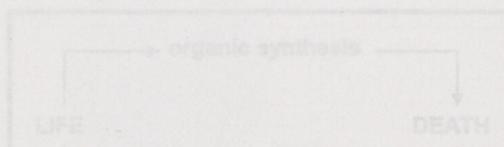
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Remains of plant material (after being consumed and partly destroyed by animals), and the remains of animals and other microorganisms, are decomposed by microorganisms. Especially, soil microorganisms play very important roles in decomposing organic substances into mineral nutrients and elements. The processes of synthesis and decomposition form the basic cycle of life and death (Fig. 1.1).

Fig. 1.1 The processes of synthesis and decomposition form the basic cycle of life and death. (adapted from Wood, 1995)



This text is an introductory information on cycling of important plant and microbial nutrients in terrestrial ecosystem, emphasising microbial transformations and processes.