Food Scraps Are Not Garbage!

Community curbside composting is easy and good for the environment. By putting your kitchen scraps and organic household waste into the 'green bin' instead of the trash can you can turn 'garbage' into 'black gold.'

What is compost?

Composting is the natural process of recycling organic matter, such as leaves and food scraps, into a valuable fertilizer—compost—that can enrich soil and plants. Anything that grows decomposes eventually; composting simply speeds up the process by providing an ideal environment for bacteria, fungi, and other decomposing organisms to do their work. The resulting decomposed matter, which often ends up looking like fertile garden soil, is called compost. Fondly referred to by farmers as "black gold," compost is rich in nutrients and can be used for gardening, horticulture, and agriculture.

Why bother composting?

TO REDUCE PERSONAL FOOD WASTE

An average American family of four throws out about $150 worth of food per month, a 50% increase since the 1970s. The category of edible food most wasted by households is fruits and vegetables. The best way to reduce impacts from food waste is to prevent waste from occurring in the first place, however, even if we do everything possible to decrease food waste, there will still be food scraps that cannot be consumed (e.g., a banana peel). Composting is a great way to recycle those discards instead of tossing them in the trash.

TO SAVE MUNICIPALITIES MONEY

Not only is food waste a burden on the environment, but processing it is costly. The average cost to landfill municipal solid waste in the U.S. was around $55 per ton in 2019. With the U.S. generating more than 267 million tons of municipal waste in 2017 and sending two-thirds of that to landfills and incinerators we spent billions of dollars on waste management. Composting at home allows us to divert some of that waste from landfills.

TO CUT METHANE EMISSIONS FROM LANDFILLS

Landfills are the third-largest source of human-generated methane emissions in the U.S. When compostable waste is landfilled, it gets buried under massive amounts of other trash, which cuts off a regular supply of oxygen for the organisms which break down the waste. As a result, the waste is broken down by organisms that can live without free-flowing oxygen and bio-gas is created as a by-product. This bio-gas is roughly 50% methane and 50% carbon dioxide, both potent greenhouse gases, with methane being 28 to 36 times more effective than CO_2 at trapping heat in the atmosphere.

We Have a Garbage Problem

Food waste is the most common material landfilled and incinerated in the U.S. In fact, about 50% of typical municipal garbage set at the curb is compostable.

Try these strategies to reduce food waste before it gets to the trash can:

Shop more carefully. Make a shopping list with quantities that takes your existing supplies into account

Properly store fruits and vegetables. Fruits and veggies are the top category of waste food. Learn how to properly store them to prolong their freshness.

Eat or freeze leftovers. Studies have shown that food being 'lost' in the fridge is a top reason for throwing food away. Leftovers are the second most wasted food category.

Understand date labels and use your senses to decide if food is spoiled. Widespread confusion has been reported regarding spoilage and is a major reason food is thrown away, leading to wasted food that is not yet spoiled.

Curbside Composting is Easy

If composting outdoors at home has never appealed to you because of the effort, using a green bin is easy, clean, efficient and convenient

1

If you like, line a counter top (or under-cabinet) container with a **compostable liner**

2

Put food scraps & approved items into the **container**

3

When full, transfer the contents of the container into your **green bin**

4

On collection day take your green bin **to the curb**

Put it in the Bin

fruit & vegetable peels
produce seeds, pits, stems, corn cobs
eggs & egg shells
meat & seafood including bones, shells
house plants & flowers
non-synthetic tea bags
coffee grounds
wood toothpicks, popsicle sticks, chop sticks,
hair, human and animal
house plants & flowers
food-soiled napkins and paper towels
wood ash & sawdust
pet food
cookies, cake, pasta, grains, bread
dairy/ cheese yogurt
house plants & flowers
natural wine corks
cooking oil & grease

Compost aids the environment

Compost provides a range of environmental benefits, including improving soil health, reducing reliance on synthetic fertilizers, recycling nutrients, and mitigating the impact of droughts.

IT IMPROVES SOIL HEALTH AND LESSENS EROSION

Compost is an essential tool for improving large-scale agricultural systems. It contains three primary nutrients needed by crops: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Instead of relying on synthetic fertilizers that contain harmful chemicals, composting offers a safer alternative which keeps the nutrients in the soil for a long time. Synthetic fertilizers wash out of the soil rapidly and seep into nearby drinking water sources and bodies of water. Research has proven the capability of compost to increase soil's productivity and resilience.

IT HELPS TO CONSERVE WATER

Agriculture accounts for about 80% of the nation's water use and it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Research has shown the water-retaining capacities of soil increase with the addition of organic matter. Each 1% increase in soil organic matter helps soil hold 20,000 gallons more water per acre. By using compost to foster healthy soil, farmers can use less water and can still have higher yields compared with farming with degraded soil.

The following sources have graciously provided content for this publication:

Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-11/from-farm-to-kitchen-the-environmental-impacts-of-u.s.-food-waste_508-tagged.pdf

NRDC (National Resources Defense Council: www.nrdc.org/stories/composting-101

Institute for Local Self-Reliance: ilsr.org/compost-impacts-posters

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