



Blue Ridge SuN is the monthly newsletter from the Sustainability Committee.

COMPOSTING

Why should I compost?

From the EPA: "Yard trimmings and food residuals together constitute 26 percent of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream. That's a lot of waste to send to landfills when it could become useful and environmentally beneficial compost instead! Composting offers the obvious benefits of resource efficiency and creating a useful product from organic waste that would otherwise have been land-filled."

Why not just put it in a plastic bag and throw it out with the garbage?

Since plastic bags basically came into use as trash bags within the second half of the twentieth century, it has been hypothesized that garbage bags buried in landfills could take hundreds, if not thousands of years to break down. Thus any organic material contained within these garbage bags would not reenter the ecosystem until the bags decompose.

What should I compost?

That depends. Technically any organic material can be composted but the choice of what you compost depends on your location, what you intend to do with the compost, and how much time and effort you are willing to put into the process. At the end of the newsletter are a few websites that can help answer this and other questions. The bottom line is that all of us can compost a great deal of matter that is typically thrown away.

What do I do with my compost?

If you grow anything from vegetables in a garden to flowers in a pot, compost can be an excellent, **FREE** form of fertilizer to aid you in your endeavor. If you do not grow plants or do not wish to use compost in your garden and/or pots, I bet someone you know would be happy to put your compost to good use. Last semester a group of BRCC employees started a garden on the HCC campus. They might appreciate the donation of some compost for their garden.

Isn't composting a smelly process?

Composting should not produce foul odors if the process is done correctly. An odor from the compost usually indicates too much moisture and too little oxygen so it is probably time to stir the compost.

Isn't composting an outside activity?

Not necessarily. There are products on the market that can be used to compost in your house or garage.

Do you want to learn more?

Here are a few websites, most of which have links to others. And you can also do your own web search.

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/rrr/composting/>

<http://www.howtocompost.org/>

<http://www.ecocycle.org/compost/index.cfm>

http://journeytoforever.org/compost_indoor.html