

Home composting family project

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If you're concerned about the amount of garbage you throw out every week, you may want to consider composting as an alternative. Home composting of organic waste is a popular, sensible way to recycle and it's a project the whole family can take part in.

By setting up your own composting system, you can do your part to help ease the strain on our landfills, and, at the same time, cultivate a rich soil booster which can be used to fertilize your vegetable and flower gardens.

A good portion of household garbage is made up of organic waste, consisting of vegetable peelings, egg and nut shells, table scraps, coffee grounds, grass clippings, leaves and so on. These materials are good composting fodder because they decompose fairly quickly.

The secret of the composting process lies in the microscopic bacteria which live in soil and food. These tiny organisms literally eat away at organic wastes. The decomposition triggered by these minute life forms causes the pile to heat up and the heat speeds up the further breakdown of material. The result of this continuous action is the black-brown crumbly substance we call compost.

Setting Up

A compost system can be as simple or complex as you want. There are dozens of methods for establishing a successful pile, but it really depends on the amount of space you have, and what your composting needs are. If you have an extensive garden, you may want to generate more compost than someone who has a small flowerbed.

Finding a space for your compost pile will also take some thought. It's best to locate it in a shady spot within easy walking distance from your kitchen. Once you have chosen a spot, you'll need to decide how many containers you need for your system. A compost container isn't

absolutely necessary, but it will keep the pile neat and helps to discourage pets and wild animals from foraging in your compost. Some people even prefer to maintain in-ground compost piles.

If you choose to go with an above-ground container system, you may want to use a one, two, or three-bin setup. Bins can be made of wood, masonry, chicken wire and so on. With a two or three-bin system, one bin is generally used for storing finished compost, while the other two generate compost. A garbage can with ventilation holes in the sides is probably one of the easiest types of compost containers to make.

Once you've set up your system, you're ready to start building your compost pile. Start with a layer of kitchen and yard waste and cover it with soil. Keep building the layers up until the unit is full. Don't forget to continue to turn the pile periodically - this keeps the decomposition process going. You may also want to add supplements to the pile to help it along, such as compost starter, manure or lime.

Once your pile is established, it's important to make sure that it always has adequate moisture. The material in the pile should always be as damp as a moist sponge.

You may also want to cover your compost heap to protect it from too much rainfall. Conversely, if the pile becomes too dry, you'll want to add some water.

The amount of time it takes your compost heap to break down depends on the types of wastes you've placed in the pile, how often you turn the pile over and how much moisture it contains. Generally, piles that are turned frequently are quicker to produce compost. As a result, the decomposition period can take anywhere from a couple of months to one or two years.

While your compost heap is developing, it's a good idea to keep tabs on the amount of heat that is being generated. When it stops generating heat, or if it begins to produce odors, the contents should be turned over. However, a compost



Lucky cat

THE BIG NEWS IN BATH DECOR IS COORDINATION! Now you can dress your whole bath in a single shopping trip, with a complete line of accessories styled to enhance a decorative shower curtain. Shown here is "Lucky," a beguiling black cat design by Hygiene. This curtain is protected with Du Pont "Teflon" soil and stain repellent, so soapy water, spilled shampoo and leaky lotions are repelled and unsightly mildew is discouraged. Coordinating accessories include a wastebasket, cushioned seat, tissue holder, toothbrush holder, drinking glass, soap dish and larger-than-life bath mat. Add pink towels to pick up the pink hearts in the design, and enjoy a carefree bath that gets it all together.

heap that has been properly established and managed should not smell.

When the composting process is complete, you shouldn't be able to identify the original waste components. However, some materials may take longer to break down than others, so you may want to sort out the larger portions before using the compost in your garden.

Worms

You may also want to try composting with worms. Redworms in particular are known to thrive in compost heaps. Their continuous movement keeps the pile well aerated and this cuts down on the amount of time it takes for the organic contents to break down. As a result, compost heaps with worms may not need to be turned as often.

Vancouver company leads the world with largest computer display screen

By JOHN EBERLEE

A Vancouver high-tech company has developed and will soon begin manufacturing the world's largest flat computer display screen - an electronic drafting board for architects, engineers and graphic designers.

Invented by Charles Haynes, the president of Plasma Computer Products (PCP), the half-inch thick screen consists of one layer of "plasma" - an electrically-charged gaseous material - sandwiched between two layers of glass. Haynes says the device offers several advantages over traditional cathode ray screens.

For one thing, he notes, the flat, tiltable screen is better suited for artistic purposes than are conventional curved monitors. The user can draw sketches and scribbles directly on the screen, using a pen-shaped pointer device that converts visual

data into a form computers can understand.

"The light from plasma is a lot steadier than the light from a flickering cathode ray tube," he adds. "And because there is no cathode radiation passing through the screen and hitting you, there are therefore no health concerns."

But the most significant advantage is size. PCP's plasma screens, which dwarf cathode ray monitors, measure up to 150 centimetres square. Haynes says screens as large as picture windows could easily be built.

These unusual dimensions mean computer users have more elbow room to make intricate drawings. They can also view a lot more information at a time because, unlike cathode ray monitors, a plasma screen's resolution does not decrease when the area of the screen increases.

"Our screen is so large and its

resolution is so high that you can use it to display a full-size, detailed city map," says Haynes, who expects fire and police departments will find uses for plasma screens in dispatching. Other potential applications include desktop publishing: two full size newspaper pages can be viewed simultaneously - with room to spare.

Flat plasma screens may also become popular as desktops themselves, he predicts. "When you go to work, you could flick on the screen and up would come an electronic calendar, note pad, address book and business card index."

However, it will be several years before such plasma screens are affordable. Current prototypes cost \$75,000. Haynes says the first mass-produced screens may sell for around \$10,000.

The plasma screen was developed with help from scientific research tax credits. It was showcased at the Canada Pavilion during Expo '86.

Coffee machines

Continued from Page 2

In the interest of safety, Proctor-Silex requests that owners of the recalled coffeemakers discontinue using them and return the coffeemakers by mail, as soon as possible. Only the basic unit should be mailed, immediately, together with a label showing a return mailing address in block print. Do not return the glass carafe, lid or basket parts.

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Proctor-Silex will replace the coffeemaker with a 12-cup coffeemaker.

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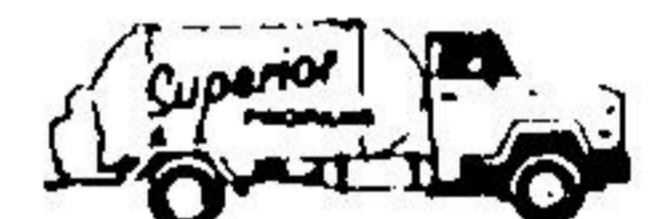
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