

# Reducing kitchen and yard waste is important to us all

By Grace C. Lockwood

In the light of all the heated protests surrounding any proposed dump site, we must realize that we, as a community, and as individuals, create the need for dumps. Therefore, we should be doing all we can to reduce the pressure on existing dumps through the three R's: reduce, reuse and recycle.

All three can be applied to kitchen and yard waste. The major way to reduce organic waste is through composting. Almost any organic matter can be composted, included hair and natural textiles such as wool and cotton rags. Larger and coarser materials such as branches, large stems, bark, leaves, etc. should be chopped up first into small pieces in order to compost faster. Cooked meat, chicken and fish scraps can also be added but should be buried in the middle of the pile to avoid attracting undesirable. Large bones should be left out as they take forever to decompose. Bonemeal should be added and mixed in occasionally.

For very small gardens, a simple form of composting can be done by burying vegetable scraps and coffee grounds directly into the garden soil. This takes next to no time and decomposes very rapidly to add nutrients to the soil. For larger gardens, a two-bin composter with each bin being 4 by 4 feet will yield a nutrient rich compost for the flower and vegetable gardens at very little cost. The bin front should be removable for easy access.

One bin can be filled then turned over regularly and left to decompose while the other is being filled. The compost pile can be layered with alternating layers of kitchen waste, grass clippings, leaves, etc. and dirt, but this isn't absolutely necessary. Add some bloodmeal or other source of nitrogen to keep the carbon/nitrogen ration stable. If carbon rich materials like sawdust and woodchips are added, the bacteria will quickly use up the nitrogen available and

## Garden Graces

can no longer break down the material.

The pile must also be turned over regularly to introduce oxygen into the pile and fresh material should be buried.

To start the composting action in the spring, compost accelerators can be purchased. They provide a boost for bacteria to begin the biodegradation process. As a general rule, do not add dis-

eased material to the compost pile. Chances are the disease or pests will be destroyed but you don't want to risk spreading it.

If you cannot or choose not to compost, many communities have special pickup services collect leaves and brush for town composting in the spring and fall. Find out the times and bag the material in clear plastic bags. The finished product is used for parks or is available to gardeners for pick up.

Another way to reduce and

reuse is to get together with a few neighbors and rent a wood chipper once or twice a year. The chipper reduces branches and brush into loads of mulch to put on the garden. Also, wash and keep plastic plant pots, cardboard milk cartons, egg cartons, coffee cans, juice cans, shoe boxes, etc., for starting plants and seeds instead of buying plastic seed flats which are subsequently thrown out. The containers are reusable and deeper than seed flats for better root growth.

For hard to transplant plants, use peat pellets. If there is a handy person around, you can build custom wooden seed flats to fit your growing space. They should be 3" deep for good root development.

With a little care, you can extend concern for the environment to all aspects of gardening. Gardening is said to be good for the soul; it should also be good for the earth.

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