

Composting Your



Food Waste

Neighbor Talks: *Environmentalism at Home*

Session Five

Environmentalism at Home

Neighbor Talks 2022 series

- Where to recycle or donate (presented at GFCA annual meeting)
- Going Solar
- Energy Efficiency at Home
- Incorporating Native Plants (Pike and Rose)
- ***Composting Your Food Waste***

Agenda

- Introduction
- Community Survey Results
- Montgomery County's Goals and Approach
- Composting Options
 - Backyard Methods
 - Drop-off Locations
 - Curbside Collection
- Next Steps
- Resources

Community Interest Survey Results

160 respondents

- **Q1-2: 32% (51 respondents) already compost:**
 - 60% (28) do backyard composting
 - 23% (11) use a curbside collection service
 - 8% (4) take compost to MOM's Organic Market
- **Q3: For those who don't compost,**
 - 72% (77) want to learn more about county curbside pickup
 - 26% (28) want to learn more about private curbside pickup
 - 29% (31) want to learn about drop-off collection
 - 24% (26) are not interested in information

- **Q4: Concerns about food waste composting:**
 - 62% (93) pests
 - 53% (79) odors
 - 40% (60) convenient access
 - 30% (44) cost
 - 17% (25) no concerns
 - 17% (24) other (24 comments)

- **Q5: Likelihood of starting or expanding food waste composting:**
 - very likely 39% (59)
 - unsure 39% (59)
 - unlikely 22% (34)

Montgomery County

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/foodwaste/>

Goal: Approximately 124,000 tons of food waste, or food scraps, were disposed in the waste in Montgomery County, MD in 2017. Approximately 51,000 tons of food scraps are disposed by the single-family sector annually. Diverting food scraps and other acceptable organic materials for recycling would help the County towards achievement of the goal to recycle 70% by 2020.*

*MoCo Sequestration WorkGroup Urban/ Suburban, Food Waste and Land-Use Solutions. P.3; <https://mocofoodcouncil.org/resources/> and p. 9 of Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Scraps Diversion (April 2018) at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/foodwaste/>

County Food Waste Recycling, Guidance, and Pilots for Single-Family Homes

- Backyard Food Waste Compost Bin Project
 - Citizens testing different bins
- Curbside Collection Pilot Project
 - Two neighborhoods in Silver Spring & Potomac
- Composting Rules & Guidance
 - Tip Sheets

Collecting your scraps:



Examples of countertop bins with lids

Keep on countertop, under sink, or in refrigerator

Use these bins to collect the food waste, then put it in your backyard composting tumbler, take it to MOM's Organic Market, or have a private composting company pick it up.

Acceptable Compostable Materials

WHAT TYPES OF MATERIALS CAN BE ADDED TO YOUR COMPOST BIN

Greens (Nitrogen-Rich)

- Coffee grounds and paper filters
- Tea bags and loose tea
- Grass clippings
(or recycle them by grasscycling)
- Green plants and garden trimmings
- House plants
- Fresh flowers
- Fruit and vegetable peelings

Browns (Carbon-Rich)

- Bread and grains
- Corncobs*
- Dry plant material
- Eggshells*
- Food-soiled paper towels and napkins
- Leaves, small twigs*, and woody clippings*
- Nut shells
- Pine needles
- Stale beans, flour, and spices
- Straw and hay

- Tumbler bins
- Stationary bins



For use outdoors. Safe from smells and pests.

Follow these Four Steps to Backyard Composting of Food Scrap

- 1 Add your “browns” and “greens” material to your backyard compost bin (2:1 by volume).** Browns are dry carbon-rich plant materials, such as breads, grains, eggshells, dried leaves and twigs, while greens are wet, nitrogen-rich materials such as fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds, tea bags and loose tea, and grass clippings. Add these to your compost bin in a 2:1 ratio by volume. For example, for every two cups of browns add 1 cup of greens.
- 2 Keep your pile moist but not soggy.** Moisture allows for your compost pile to decompose faster. You are looking for a pile that is as moist as a wrung-out sponge. If your pile is too dry it will slow down the decomposition process.
- 3 Mix your browns and greens.** Mixing your browns and greens together will ensure that all the materials are getting enough oxygen and moisture to keep the organisms in the pile happy.
- 4 Chop everything into smaller pieces.** Adding materials that are chopped in 4-6 inch pieces will speed up the decomposition process because you are exposing new surfaces where decomposers can start feeding.

Ratio of Carbon to Nitrogen?

- Research shows ideal is 25 to 35 parts Carbon to 1 part Nitrogen, but there is a wide range.
- Bottom line: Go for 1 to 1 and don't worry.
- Smelly? Add carbon.
- Not warming up? Add nitrogen.



Controlling Odors

- Turn pile – mix and turn materials with a shovel or rake.
- Add more brown materials like leaves and yard trim.
- Temporarily remove the lid to increase air flow and evaporation.

Preventing Pests

- Avoid materials that should not be added to compost bin.
- Layer food scraps with 3-4 inches of brown materials.
- Add moisture with more green materials or water and turn frequently to disturb the potential habitat for pests.
- Stationary bins are **required** to have secure lids and barriers like hardware cloth underneath them.
- Locate bin away from walls, tall plants, and clutter

Take your food waste to a free drop-off location

MOM's Organic Market, 5566 Randolph Road, corner of Randolph Rd. & Nebel St.

- Bring food waste in a reusable bin or in compostable bags.
- All food waste including chicken bones, eggshells, coffee grinds, & plastics that say 'compostable' or 'biodegradable'
- Recycling station is to the right of the front door on the sidewalk



Private Company Curbside Collection



- Monthly fee
- Weekly pickup
- Company-provided bin and liner bags
- Receive a bag of compost dirt once a year



What's Next?

- If you'd like to talk to one of us about next steps in your household, we'd be happy to help.
- If you're interested in joining our Environmentalism at Home Team, please contact Marjorie, Jerry, Marta, or Emily. Our plans include:
 - Reaching out to our Students: We'll be reaching out to the Walter Johnson environmental club and the Zero Carbon Footprint club to collaborate with some of the excellent work being done on this very issue. It is no surprise that students are leading the way!
 - Staying in touch with our MoCo staff and leaders to encourage the County to incentivize households to increase their food waste composting and to reduce our household carbon footprint.
 - Hosting a “show and tell” at the Winter on the Farmland Party (tentatively January 8, 2023) with more information and with examples of bins we're using for food waste composting.
 - Hosting a 6th Neighbor Talk: Electric Vehicles and setting up an EV charging station

Resources

- Information is available on the GFCA website, under [Caring for Our Environment - Greater Farmland Civic Association](#)
- Tip Sheets for Backyard Food Waste Composting at https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/depwebstore/items.aspx?subcatalog_id=93. These are excellent!

Resources Cont'd

Dedicated Food Scraps Recycling Collectors

[Apex Organix](#), 703-403-9095

[Compost Cab](#), 202-695-2020

[Compost Crew](#), 301-202-4450

[EnviRelation](#), 202-465-4802

[Key Compost](#), 240-608-0283

Organic Agriculture Recycling, LLC, christopher_br@hotmail.com, 240-898-7284

[Organic Waste Haulers](#), 301-755-9286

NOTE: Veteran Compost no longer serves our neighborhood

Another approach: Vermiculture

If you're interested in learning about vermiculture (worm composting), the garden club will be posting information on the GFCA web site at <https://greaterfarmland.org/garden-club.html>. This was prepared by our neighbor, Faye Bresler. If you have prepared your bin and need a small amount of starter worms, you can contact Faye at ftbresler@verizon.net.