

Solana Center Composter

Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2012

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Featured Article

Think all earthworms are the same? Think again! Which worms make great composters? Which worms rarely emerge from the soil? Which worms can grow over a foot long?

[Read on...](#)

Upcoming Events

January 12 -
Fallbrook Reuse & Repair
Fair in Fallbrook

February 2 - Free
Composting Workshop at
Water Conservation Garden
in El Cajon

February 9 - Free
Composting Workshop at
Crestridge Ecological
Reserve in Crest

February 23 - Free
Composting Workshop at
Flower Fields in Carlsbad

Pest Control Strategies for Backyard Composting



Are there pests in your neighborhood? You may not even be aware of any small creatures like raccoons, mice, rats or insects until you start to compost. Previously unnoticed pests may now be looking for a new source of food or a cozy bed in your compost pile. It is important to note that composting will not encourage pest populations to move into your area, though a neglected pile may attract local populations and make them more visible to you. Studies have shown that pests, including rats, were the third most common composting obstacle following lack of space and lack of knowledge. Pest problems should not be underestimated, but there are a few simple measures that can help to keep pests from investigating your compost pile. The best solution is prevention!

Pest-proofing your bin can prevent animals from tunneling up through the bottom, climbing into the bin from the sides or top, or chewing holes in the bin. Click the link below for some tips:

[Read on...](#)

February 23 - March 16 -
Master Composter Course at
Water Conservation Garden
in El Cajon

March 2 - Free Composting
Workshop at Barrels &
Branches Nursery in
Encinitas

March 23 - Free Composting
Workshop at San Diego
Botanic Garden in Encinitas

Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Thank you for your
support!**



**WASTE
REVOLUTION**

Thank you for your votes and support during the Eco Ambassador campaign. Our Waste Revolution program has been awarded \$2,000 and we are one step closer to tackling waste in all San Diego schools! We appreciate your support and we couldn't have done this without you!

**Become a Master
Composter!**

Compost Bin News: Check Out What's Cooking With Compost Bins in Your Area



City of San Diego

Through a *new* program, subsidized compost bins are now available for City of San Diego residents! Live in the City and excited about composting? Apply now for a bin subsidy voucher to be used towards the purchase of a compost bin at select Dixieline

ProBuild locations. Bin options include the SoilSaver, Can-O-Worms, and Spinning Compost Tumbler. Click [here](#) to access the application and see more information on bin prices and specifications.

Carlsbad

Prices have been lowered on compost bins for Carlsbad residents! The Worm Factory 360 and SoilSaver are now available for \$40 each (limit one per household). Get your bin at these new low prices at the Solana Center, Monday - Friday until 4 p.m. For bin specifications and pickup location, click [here](#).

Unincorporated County & Encinitas

In support of waste diversion and sustainable communities, compost bins are available to residents of Encinitas and the Unincorporated areas of the County at the subsidized rate of \$40 each. If you already have a bin, consider gifting one for the holidays to the gardener or environmentalist that you know. Bins are available for purchase at the Solana Center, Monday - Friday until 4 p.m. Click [here](#) for bin specifications and the Solana Center address.



Illustration by Christian Lindemann (2009)

Ready to become a composting ambassador? Then join us for the Master Composter course, a unique opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of the composting process in order to share this knowledge and passion with others.

**Water Conservation Garden
Saturdays, February 23 -
March 16
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Click [here](#) for more info or to
register.**

To be added to the interest list for the Master Composter course in your neighborhood, please click [here](#).

5 Tips for a Sustainable Holiday Season

[1] Get Crafty! Make your loved ones smile with homemade gifts from re-purposed materials. Buying secondhand and re-gifting are other ways to support the reuse of valuable resources.

[2] That's a Wrap! Forage around your home for creative alternatives to wrapping paper.

ROTLINE: How long until my compost is ready to use?



The timeline for cultivating finished compost varies according to a number of factors. Composting practices occur on a spectrum, but can be described according to three basic approaches: more passive composting, more active composting, and hot composting. Passive composting (also referred to as cool, continuous composting) requires the lowest levels of engagement for pile set-up and maintenance and, accordingly, takes the longest to produce finished compost, typically between 6-18 months. Active composting requires more time and effort for set-up and maintenance, but can produce compost in 5-6 months. Hot composting is the most time and labor intensive of the methods, but yields finished compost in the shortest period of time, usually in 3-4 months.

Click the link below for some facets to consider when estimating how long your pile will take to fully decompose:

[Read on...](#)

Know Your Worms!

Pages from old publications or fabric scraps offer a unique aesthetic and help reduce paper consumption.

[3] Lights off! Set a timer on electric decorations to reduce energy use (and to keep your neighbors cheery!)

[4] Evergreen Dreams? Aim to purchase a holiday tree from sustainable, local growers.

[5] Eaten your Fill? Promote local habitat and community health by composting or donating your leftover food.

Click the link below for more!

[Read on...](#)



Have you visited our new blog?

Our new blog "Fresh Perspectives" is now active! This is a collaborative space where Solana Center staff and community members can share ideas, news, and personal stories on everything from sustainability to composting.

Click [here](#) to visit.



Worms are a highly diverse and invaluable species! Let's take a closer look at what makes our wiggly friends so unique.

What Makes Compost Worms Special?

The term 'compost worms' refers to several species of epigeic earthworms (namely red worms *Eisenia fetida*, *Eisenia andrei*, and *Eisenia veneta*) that have been domesticated over the years to assist with controlled decomposition. Red worms are ideal worm bin residents. Their comfort in concentrated populations, their comparatively sedentary lifestyle, and their need to live in loose substrate rich in organic detritus allow compost worms to thrive in vermicomposting conditions. Compost worms self-regulate populations to accommodate space and resource availability. Perhaps most importantly, red worms are voracious eaters that can process up to half their weight in organic material every day. That's a lot of nutrient-dense castings!

What About Other Worms?

Earthworms are ecosystem engineers that provide vital services in maintaining healthy soil, the foundation of a flourishing ecosystem. Different types of earthworms are adapted to accomplish this task in a variety of ways. One of the most important services worms provide is the addition, convection, and conversion of soil nutrients. Additionally, worms help to improve soil porosity and permeability, and support microorganism communities across many layers of soil strata.

Click the link below to see the chart describing the three basic types of earthworms.

[Read on...](#)

Thank you to all of our volunteers! We would like to specifically acknowledge the following volunteers for their support:

Deryl Adderson
Nora Adderson
Charles Anacker
Marysa Andriola
Ann Baldrige
Kerry Bauer
Jim Beyster
Jiddu Bezares
Paige Decino
Whitney Dueñez
Rebeca Elliott
David Emmerson
Bryn Faris
Tim Fleming
Jennifer Gerson
John Goodrich
Carol Graham
Jane Johns
Zander Johns
Mike Johnson
Jacqueline Kim
CJ LeBel
Andrea Loyko
Andi Macleod
Laura Malter
Erin McConkey
Fiona McLean
Caroline Olsen-Van Stone
Jim Renn
Mike Shields
Nathan Smedley
Tony Su
Donna Uyeno
Ramon Zarate

Volunteer Spotlight: Jim Beyster



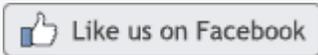
How many people can boast that they compost, garden, scuba dive, and volunteer weekly with three organizations? Our guess is not many, but we are lucky to have one such person in our talented team of volunteers: Jim Beyster.

Jim began volunteering with the Solana Center two years ago after completing the Master Composter course in the City of San Diego. He went on to take the Gardening 201 course where he met fellow Master Composter Lou-Ellen Robbins. Since then the two have been working hard to plan and design the Doyle Park Community Garden on Regents Road in UTC. If the plans are approved, this will be the first community garden on City of San Diego parkland.

As a Solana Center ambassador, Jim maintains the compost bins and worm bin at Park Dale Lane Elementary in Encinitas. With assistance from parent volunteers, students, and Master Composter Mike Shields, Jim is in the process of re-directing all lunch food waste to the compost bins on-site.

He also manages the compost area at Olivewood Gardens in National City and provides general gardening and event support. In addition, Jim is a volunteer Aquarist Assistant at Birch Aquarium in La Jolla where he assists with feeding and tank maintenance.

Jim is a San Diego local with 25 years of scuba diving experience. An accomplished underwater photographer, he looks forward to his yearly dive trips around the world. This past summer he traveled with



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a dive group to Indonesia where he explored exotic reefs in the warm Indian Ocean.. His advice for leading such an active and multifaceted life? "Learn by doing. Just start and you'll learn and fit the pieces together as you go along".

For more information on how you can also take action in your community, click below or email Volunteer Coordinator, Dominique Navarro, at dominique@solanacenter.org.



"HOT" Topics: One Man's Trash is Another Man's Oven?

Some people believe that composting is an art, while others classify it as a science. Whatever side you fall on, you probably have not considered pairing it with the culinary arts!

Collecting coffee grounds, stowing kitchen scraps, and meticulously measuring the temperature of a large steaming pile of compost are all the signs of an active composter! There are a few individuals who are testing the limits of safety by using the heat of their hot piles to actually cook meals like turkey, cake, and even cheese and yogurt...

There are many possible health risks, so please do not try this at home!

Whatever culinary creation they decide to cook, composting chefs all agree on three basic techniques. They all use extremely hot piles that are at least 150-180° Fahrenheit. They use airtight containers with as many as three seals, anchored with some kind of rope, and they err on the side of too much time rather than too little.



Jim McClarin (*pictured*), a compost chef profiled in *Mother Earth News*, spent many years perfecting the art of cooking in his compost pile, with mixed results. He tried to make yogurt in his cubic yard compost pile by putting milk in an airtight container and placing it in the middle of his hot pile. After 12 hours, he pulled it out. To his surprise, it contained cheese curds! On a more successful cooking adventure, he roasted a duck in his pile for 23 hours.

Another composter, Malcolm Beck is one of the pioneers of large-scale composting from Texas. He has written instructional books on compost and organic gardening, like *The Secret Life of Compost*, and has his own compost company. One year, he decided to try cooking his Thanksgiving turkey in one of his large compost piles. His piles were 8 feet tall and reached temperatures up to 180° Fahrenheit. He successfully cooked this particular bird for 18 hours, and it is still a Thanksgiving tradition for his family and friends!

A homeschool class in Massachusetts took a more scientific approach to bake a chocolate cake. The parents/teachers used the experience to teach the class about biology and measurement. The 11 year-olds mixed their cake batter and sealed it in an airtight container. Then, they buried it 2 feet deep in the 20 foot pile. They let it bake in the compost pile for 24 hours. After half an hour of unearthing, the class tasted the cake: "It was the perfect lava cake, slightly crusty around the edges and pudding-like in the middle," one taster reported. They also tried

making pasta and red sauce, with mixed success. To read more about the class' cooking attempts, click [here](#).

Once again, please amuse your friends with these recipes, but do not try them! And if you ever do, use your senses. If it smells bad, don't eat it!