



Solana Center Composter Quarterly Newsletter Spring 2013

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Featured Article

Want to speed up the decomposition process? Want to neutralize the threat of weed seeds in your pile? Check out our tips for cranking up the heat in your backyard compost pile!

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Upcoming Events

**April 13 - Scrub the Scrub:
Canyon Cleanup at
Manchester Preserve in
Encinitas**

April 20 & 21 - Western

ROTLINE: Are the White Grubs in my Bin safe to put in my Garden?



Figearer Beetle larva

These robust grubs are invaluable residents in the compost bin, helping to accelerate decomposition and enrich the nutrient composition of the finished product. (Not to mention pretty cute!)

San Diego composters and gardeners have long expressed an interest in the wiggly, white grubs living in their bins and garden beds. While grub species differ depending on your location, residents of the western/southwestern United States and Mexico are likely referring to one specific insect native to our region.

What are they?

Week at the Del Mar
Fairgrounds

April 21 - Earth Fair in the
City of San Diego

April 27 - Creek to Bay
Cleanup at Beacon's and
Swami's Beaches in
Encinitas

April 28 - Free Composting
Workshop at Ocean Knoll
Educational Farm in
Encinitas

May 18 - Free Composting
Workshop at Calavera Hills
Community Center in
Carlsbad

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Farmers Market Boxes



We've partnered with Specialty
Produce to provide you with
access to locally grown fruits
and veggies!

Click [here](#) for more information

**Become a Master
Composter!**

Digging around your backyard compost bin, you may notice a plentiful population of white, soft-bodied creatures with a somewhat extraterrestrial quality. No, this isn't first contact; these are the larvae of the Figeater beetle (*Cotinis mutabilis*). These larvae can grow up to 2 inches long, and are commonly spotted at rest, rolled into a tight "C" posture. Figeater beetle larvae have been aptly nicknamed "crawly backs" for their interesting method of mobility; these larvae propel themselves by flipping upside down and using the stiff hairs on their backs to create traction, rendering their six tiny legs essentially afunctional.

Why are figeater beetle grubs in my compost bin? Are they safe to add to my garden? Click the link below to learn more:

[Read on...](#)

**Master Composters: Composting
Ambassadors to the San Diego
Community**



Illustration by Christian Lindemann (2014)

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.

Carlsbad:

**Harold E. Smerdu Community Garden, Carlsbad
Thursdays, April 25 - May 9
5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

**City of San Diego:
Environmental Services Department Ridgehaven Building, San Diego
Tuesdays, May 7 - June 4
5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

Priority registration for residents of the respective cities. Non-residents will be added to the wait list and added as spaces become available. Click [here](#) to register!

For over a decade, Solana Center has offered the Master Composter certification to San Diego residents interested in delving deeper into the world of composting. Hundreds of attendees have graduated from our course and earned the prestigious title of Master Composter through their dedication to composting and service to their communities. And the tradition continues; Solana Center is excited to be offering the Master Composter course four times in the year 2013!

The course covers the following aspects of composting:

- Benefits for the individual and the community
- Exploration of the diversity of composting methods/systems
- Vermicomposting (composting with worms)
- Hands-on pile building and troubleshooting
- Harvesting and using compost
- Learning how to teach composting to others

To establish full certification after the course, Master Composters are asked to complete 30 hours of volunteer work to help spread the messages of composting and sustainable living throughout San Diego. Playing a variety of roles in their communities, graduates participate by: building compost piles and serving as consultants in community gardens, helping students manage their school worm and compost bins, conducting workshops, and serving as composting representatives at community events. They are truly a talented and passionate team of ambassadors who are creating change one compost pile at a time, and we are very grateful for their service and dedication.



City of San Diego Master Composter - Spring 2012 Class

First Volunteer Cooking Class Recap & Thanks!



Our first cooking class for the volunteers at Garden Volunteer Day on January 26th was a success! Sous Chef Samuel Navarro from the U.S. Grant Hotel, Grant Grill showed us how to prepare (and eat) grilled brie and tomato sandwiches, warm swiss chard salad, and whole grain mustard potato salad. Thank you to all the volunteers who joined us and a special thank you to [Specialty Produce](#) for making this event possible.

Click [here](#) to see the recipes from the class.

If you didn't receive the invitation to the cooking class, please email Volunteer Coordinator Dominique Navarro at dominique@solanacenter.org to make sure you hear about the fun opportunities coming up for Solana Center volunteers.



Encinitas Master Composter Class of Fall 2012

For more information on the Master Composter Course including dates in your area, please click [here](#).

5 Ways to Heat Up Your Compost!



Ah, steam! Always a rewarding testament to dedicated hot composting efforts!

Want to get finished compost faster? You may want to try increasing the internal temperature of your backyard bin! Contrary to popular belief, compost piles do not heat up due to atmospheric conditions (i.e. sun exposure or warm weather), but rather, as a result of heat generation by specialized bacterial populations. Increased bacterial population density means faster decomposition due to more rapid consumption of nitrogen, carbon, moisture, and oxygen. This intensive resource consumption correlates to rapid fluctuations in bacterial



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.

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
Shel Barkan
Kerry Bauer
Jim Beyster
Whitney Dueñez
David Emmerson
Bryn Faris
Tim Fleming
Jennifer Gerson
Carol Graham
Diane Hazard
Jane Johns
Zander Johns

population size and variety. This means that a pile is only hot for a finite period of time: temperature spikes will rarely last for more than a week, and peak temperatures are unlikely to be sustained for more than a few days. Many composters will try and achieve multiple temperature spikes over several months, helping to neutralize any pernicious weed seeds in the pile, and producing finished compost in a shorter period of time.

While by no means an exhaustive explanation of the hot composting process, the following are some tips to experiment with creating some heat in your backyard bin! Click the link below learn more:

[Read on...](#)

Volunteer Spotlight: Donna Uyeno



Donna and her garden bed at the Solana Center

Donna Uyeno, or "Grandma Donna" as the Kindergarten gardeners at Kelly Elementary affectionately call her, is one of our Master Composter volunteers who has been busy sowing the seeds of food sustainability and responsible waste diversion in San Diego.

Donna first became involved with the Solana Center after taking our Gardening 101 and Master Composter courses in 2011. Bitten by the "garden bug," Donna began volunteering in the

Mike Johnson
Beth Jurecki
Jacqueline Kim
Andrea Loyko
Laura Malter
Bradley Nussbaum
Rebecca Nussbaum
Todd Pyke
Sam Roberts
Lisa Roop
Nathan Smedley
Hank Stelzl
Donna Uyeno
Wade Vernon
Ramon Zarate

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Solana Center educational garden where you can now find her gardening and composting with a smile every Thursday. Her permanent bed at our facility is abundant in mustard, dill, parsley, carrots, radishes, beets, broccoli, and nasturtiums. Recently joined by her son David and his girlfriend Coral Marion, the trio are helping to make the Solana Center garden an educational tool for the community as well as a beautiful and peaceful place where community members can see gardening and composting in action.

Every week, Donna also volunteers at Kelly Elementary with her grandson's Kindergarten class. There she helps the children plant, weed, harvest, and prepare their veggies. She loves the interaction with the kids and especially loves how excited they get when they eat the swiss chard salad or radish finger sandwiches that they grew themselves. Asked what motivates her so much to garden and teach gardening to others, she says: "I love going out into the backyard to pick something for dinner. The food you grow is so much better than what you buy. It's fun



Penny, her Rhode Island Red

and a good dose of nature you don't always get."

Donna lives in Carlsbad with her family and three chickens. "The chickens are better than I ever thought they would be. They are easy to take care of, eat the bugs and weeds, and help to make good compost," she says as she boasts of her favorite garden companions. "And I'm looking forward to fresh eggs." In her free time Donna enjoys sewing, quilting, camping, hiking, and spending

as much time as she can with her children and grandchildren.

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.

 Take Action

Carlsbad, and Encinitas
and the County of San
Diego.



"HOT" Topics: Composting in Tijuana



In January 2013, the first urban compost center on Mexico's northern border opened to the public in San Diego's sister city, Tijuana. The compost center called "Centro de Composteo Urbano, Tijuana" was truly a bi-national partnership with involvement from both sides of the border. The brainchild of Mexican nonprofit Tijuana Calidad de Vida, the project developed using seed money provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Border Program. While the City of Tijuana provided the land for the facility, the City of San Diego's Miramar Greenery provided training and technical advice, and Mexico's federal environmental agency Semarnat provided the temporary laborers needed to build the center.

The center is now open to the public and Tijuana's 1.7 million citizens are invited to visit the facility to learn about the process and benefits of composting. The compost center currently accepts trimmings and trees from public parks and nurseries, but will start processing fruit and vegetable waste in the next few months. By year's end the facility expects to have produced approximately 150 tons of compost to be used for nurseries and tree planting throughout Tijuana. One of the many shared community projects between San Diego and Tijuana, the Centro de Composteo Urbano hopes that the services and education it will provide to Tijuana residents will create benefits on both sides of the border by reducing trash in the shared Tijuana River watershed.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the project and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Border Program.