



## Solana Center Composter Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2013

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### Featured Article

*Have you ever considered how wonderful it would be to have a curbside bin for compost, just like the ones you already have for trash and recycling? Read about how one city has made this idea a reality!*

[Read on...](#)

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### Upcoming Events

**June 8 - July 4 - San Diego County Fair**

### Summer Composting Tips



The summer months are quickly approaching, and as the weather becomes hotter and dryer, it is important to be sure that your compost stays cool and moist. Here are a few tips on how to keep

**June 15** - Free Composting Workshop at Spring Valley Rec Club

**June 29** - Free Composting Workshop at San Diego Zoo

Click [here](#) to learn more.

**LOOKING FOR OUR BOOTH AT THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAIR? LOOK NO FURTHER!**

*Whether you are volunteering with us or simply swinging by to say hello, click [HERE](#) to see a map of our new location in the **Infield Farm**. (We are right next to the GIANT green vermicompost bin.)*

*The Farm is an urban agriculture hot spot, where you will find information on beekeeping, grey water, organic gardening, and much more!*

**Toast to Compost Recap & Thanks!**



The 9th Annual Toast to Compost event took place on Sunday, May 5th at the

your compost and worms happy and cool during this warm season:

- Keep your compost covered and out of direct sunlight.
- Cover the top of your compost bin with a light-colored cloth to reflect the light and heat. Remember to keep sides clear to allow air in.
- Keep the compost moist with a little water.
- Keep your worm bedding moist as well and add a little water periodically if necessary, but be sure the bin still drains properly. While you want to make sure your worms are happy and cool, you also want to be sure that you don't over-hydrate them.
- Freeze food scraps periodically to add to your worm bin during especially hot days.

With these tips, your worms and compost are sure to have a cool, pleasant summer!

**ROTLINE: How do I prevent a swarm of flies when I open my compost bin?**



While there is nothing wrong with having flies in a bin (and I challenge you to find a bin without a resident fly population) they are often cited as a nuisance by backyard composters. Flies do enrich the bin ecosystem. Having a variety of decomposers allows

new Treetop Learning Center at the San Diego Zoo! Thank you to the almost 40 attendees, who braved the rain to show up!

Click [HERE](#) to see more photos from the event!

The guest speakers were members of Closing the Loop San Diego, a small start-up that collects food waste from residences and businesses in North Park, South Park, and Normal Heights. Congratulations to Charles Anacker, our Master Composter volunteer who was highlighted as this year's Golden Pitchfork Honoree, with over 140 hours of service in many projects around the County! The event could not have been possible without the generous contributions of:

The San Diego Zoo  
City of San Diego  
Snooze Eatery\*  
Jimmy's Famous American Tavern\*  
Albertsons\*  
Ace Hardware  
Weidners Gardens  
Grangetto's  
Anderson's La Costa Nursery  
Jimbo's  
San Diego Botanic Garden  
San Diego Repertory Theatre  
Sunshine Gardens  
Starbucks Coffee

material to be broken down more efficiently, resulting in a more nutrient-diverse final product. That being said, few composters want to feel like a spelunker disturbing a long-forgotten bat cave upon lifting the lid of their bin.

While species varies with region and pile inputs, the same general techniques will control any fly population. Instead of preparing for battle when you open your bin to turn it, add water, or new material, try these tips to minimize the presence of flies:

- **Add food scraps to the bin immediately, or keep them in a kitchen scrap collector** with air holes that are too small for flies to enter. Adding exposed food to your bin is a sure way to seed a new generation of fruit flies, which assuredly accepted your invitation to lay their eggs in the scraps. If you have nothing short of an infestation of flies in your pile, this is probably the culprit.
- **Build a hot compost pile** (wherein temperatures exceed 140°F). This will kill already-present eggs and larvae, and discourage mature flies from establishing. Again, if you are dealing with a serious fly infestation, spiking pile temperature several times is an effective way to control the population.
- **Shred exposed food scraps** before adding them to the pile to kill eggs and larvae if you aren't interested in committing to a hot pile.
- **Bury food scraps in the core of the pile;** dumping them on top is a surefire way to get a mouthful of flies upon entry. The pile core is also where temperatures get the highest, so in addition to inaccessibility as a new fly nursery, the food becomes an inhospitable nursery for current residents.
- **Turn the pile every 2-3 days** to interrupt fly breeding, and discourage mature flies from establishing in the frequently disrupted material.
- **Keep a layer of browns on top of the pile** to dissuade flies from hanging out in the upper strata of the bin. Try burlap, cardboard, or newspaper for easy access to pile contents below.

\*City Commercial Composting  
Program Participants

Thank you again to all  
attendees and sponsors, you  
are truly compost  
superstars!

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### Become a Master Composter!



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.

**Check with us to find out when  
our next Master Composter  
course will be!**

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

## Curbside Composting: A Growing Trend



Here in Encinitas, there is that one day each week when we all drag our garbage, recycling, and greens bins out to the curb to be carried away. Now imagine being able to do the same thing with your compost!

In San Francisco, California, the residents don't need to imagine it because it already exists! Not only that, but participation is mandatory as well, making it one of the few cities in which curbside composting is required, rather than in many other

cities, where it is entirely optional. The curbside composting system works just like the trash and recycling systems we're all used to here: put your waste in a bin, bring it out to the curb, and have a truck carry it off.

The organic waste put in these bins extends beyond what you would be able to throw into your backyard compost pile. Fruit and vegetables, eggshells, and coffee grounds are all completely appropriate, and unlike your garden compost pile, meat and dairy are acceptable as well.

Not only does this make many plants (and farmers!) very happy, it also reduces what is put into landfills. All of the food waste that would otherwise be dumped into landfills alongside real waste and non-recyclables is now going off to places where it will be used wisely. Additionally, for those who don't have the space to have their own compost piles, curbside composting provides a wonderful alternative to putting all of your waste in the trash.

While curbside composting is not yet widely adopted, it is nevertheless slowly becoming more popular. It now exists in larger cities, such as Seattle and Portland, Oregon, as well as smaller places such as Boulder, Colorado.



### 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.

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

Deryl and Nora Adderson  
Charles Anacker  
Jim Beyster  
Charles Burcham  
Whitney Dueñez  
Tim Fleming  
Carol Graham  
Cindy Greene  
Heather Holland  
Jane Johns  
Beth Jurecki  
Sura Katz

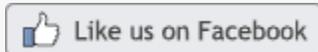
## Compost: What's So Great About it, Anyway?

We can extol the virtues of compost all day long (heck, you'll see the difference it makes in your garden) but how exactly does it work to bolster the health of an ecosystem?

Below is the Association of American Plant Food Control Officials' (AAPFCO) officially recognized list of compost benefits:

- [1] Improves soil structure and porosity** (creating a better environment for plant roots to grow)
- [2] Increases soil moisture infiltration and permeability** (improving moisture infiltration rates, reducing soil compaction, and reducing erosion and runoff)
- [3] Improves soil moisture holding capacity** (reducing water loss and nutrient leaching, and improving moisture retention)
- [4] Improves cation exchange capacity (CEC) of soils** (increasing soil fertility and nutrient retention, and decreasing groundwater contamination)
- [5] Supplies organic matter to soil** (increasing fertility and nutrient diversity)
- [6] Aids the proliferation of soil microorganisms**
- [7] Supplies beneficial microorganisms to soils and growing media**
- [8] Encourages vigorous root growth** (allowing plants better access to a diversity of nutrients)
- [9] Allows plants to more effectively utilize nutrients, while reducing nutrient loss by leaching** (allowing plants to build up natural defenses against pests and disease, and to grow more vigorously)
- [10] Enables soils to retain nutrients longer**
- [11] Contains humus** (increasing soil stability, reducing erosion, and making nutrients more available for plant uptake)
- [12] Buffers soil pH**

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This newsletter is made



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officially recognizes that compost has larger-picture benefits beyond enriching soil and soil ecosystems. These other benefits include:

- (1) Assisting in the remediation of contaminated soil** (treats heating fuels, explosives, pesticides, wood preservatives, and hydrocarbons, including polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs); binds heavy metals to prevent their entry to water sources)
- (2) Preventing pollution** (diverts materials that would become methane and leachate in a landfill, decreases storm water pollution, and prevents erosion)
- (3) Saving money and increasing resource efficiency** (reduces the need for water, fertilizers, and synthetic additives, extends landfill life, and can remediate soils once deemed unusable)

Ah, the magic of compost!

**Kroger: Old Food, Green Energy**

possible with the support of the cities of San Diego, Carlsbad, and Encinitas and the County of San Diego.



While many grocery stores simply throw out their excess perishable food, there are some large-scale grocery companies that are in fact putting their unsold food to good use. Kroger Co., one of the nation's largest food vendors, is using its old food in a very green fashion: turning it into energy using a process called an anaerobic digester system.

All of the food that cannot be donated is sent to a facility in Compton, California, where it is all dumped into a massive grinder, with all of the food still in its packaging. After being ground up, the food proceeds to a pulping machine, where all of the inorganic material is filtered out. Wastewater from a nearby dairy creamery is added to the remaining mass to create a sludge-like substance. The sludge is directed to a 250,000-gallon tank, and then is fed into a 2-million-gallon silo, which basically functions as a stomach. Inside this "stomach," bacteria set to work on the mulch, converting it in a natural process to methane gas. The gas floats to the top of the silo and is extracted to power three turbine engines on-site. This huge amount of energy, 13 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, is estimated to have the ability to power over 2,000 California homes per year.

This program takes composting to a new level. When composting, you have to be careful to keep all meat and dairy scraps out of the compost. However, with Kroger Co.'s green energy system, all unsold products are used. Other large food companies are making attempts at green energy as well. Wal-Mart and Whole Foods are both investing in solar panels to power some of their facilities.

This anaerobic digester system accomplishes the environmental sustainability factor easily, and in addition to that, unlike Wal-Mart and Whole Foods, also solves the huge problem of how to dispose the thousands of pounds of old food in a beneficial way for both the company and the environment.

For more information, [check out this article](#).