



Composting

By Samantha Butwill

What is Composting?

- Composting:
 - "the process of decomposition and recycling of organic material into a rich soil amendment"



Why Compost?

- Reduces generation of trash
 - ❑ Saves fossil fuels needed to transport trash
 - ❑ EPA estimated that 1,794 landfills in the U.S. will be full within 20 years
- Recycles nutrients back into the environment
 - ❑ Enrich garden soils
 - ❑ Regenerate poor soils
 - ❑ Reduce the need for chemical fertilizers



Composting at Litchfield High School

- Independent Project
 - Representing *Greener Impact*, the student Environmental Club at LHS
- Engineered and set into action a composting system for LHS
 - Project would not have been possible without the community's support



Bin Design

- Designed and built with assistance from Mr. Neil English
 - Three Bin System
 - Collect a maximum amount of compost
 - Keep levels of decomposition relatively separate
 - Wooden pallets
 - Given away by True Value
 - Free and recycled material
 - Allow for air flow





Completed Compost Bins at LHS – October 2010

Maintenance System

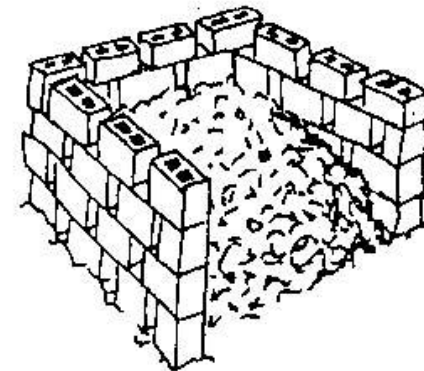
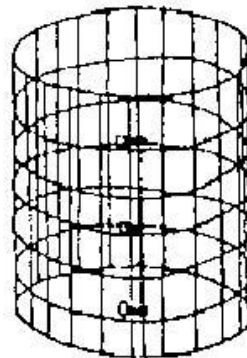
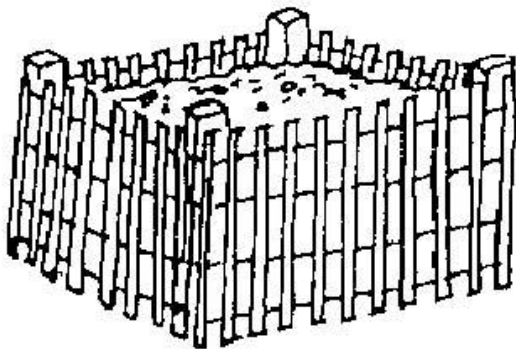
- 1 6-gallon bucket located in:
 - Cafeteria's kitchen
 - Culinary classes
 - Teacher's room
- Mr. John Whalen graciously offered to:
 - Collect the compost as part of the daily trash run
 - Transfer the compost into a larger barrel in the janitorial hallway
 - Clean the buckets
 - Return the buckets to their respective classrooms
 - Bring the compost to the outdoor bins when the barrel in the janitorial hallway is full



Composting at Home: Structure

■ Bin

- Contain components
- Retain heat and moisture
- Constructed from endless materials
 - Wooden pallets
 - Wire from fencing/ chicken wire
 - Trash can w/ bottom cut off and holes drilled in sides
 - Purchased turning bin



■ Location

- Under a tree
 - Shade will prevent compost from drying out too fast
 - Allow compost to receive adequate sunlight
- Not next to any permanent wooden structure
 - Wood may rot over time

Composting at Home: Components

■ "Greens"

- fresh (and often green) plant materials
 - green weeds or leaves
 - kitchen scraps
 - manure
- Provide a source of nitrogen



■ "Browns+

- help the compost to stay light & allow for air penetration
 - dry, dead plant materials
 - straw
 - hay
 - dry leaves
 - wood chips
 - sawdust
- Provide a source of carbon



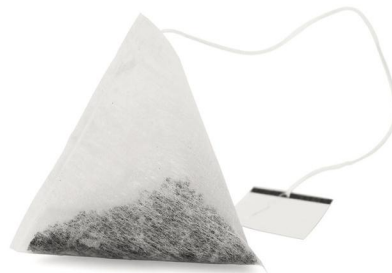
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Composting at Home: Components

■ Can be composted:

- Vegetable scraps
- Fruit scraps
- Grains
- Coffee grounds
- Coffee filters
- Tea bags
- Egg shells



■ Can NOT be composted:

- Fats
 - Oils
 - Butter
 - Lard
- Cream
- Meat
- Bones



Composting at Home: Maintenance

- Turn the compost
 - Pitchfork or shovel
 - Keep the newer food scraps buried below the surface
 - Discourage flies or other animals
 - Poke several deep holes
 - Increased air flow
 - Ensure that there is nothing growing



Composting at Home: Maintenance

- An attentive composter
 - At most an hour of turning a week
 - speed up the decomposition process
 - increase the quality of the final product
 - This is the optimal way to compost
- There is no wrong way to compost
 - When left to its own devices, organic material will decompose