

Cool to Compost

By Bonnie McGuire, Urban Park Ranger Sergeant

Out of all the garbage that New Yorkers throw away, approximately 27% of it is food waste, yard trimmings, and compostable paper. On a city scale, only the yard trimmings can be collected and composted cost-effectively. However, everyone can do their part to reduce the amount of garbage they create. Consider a compost bin, a small container that can be kept in a community garden or backyard. A lot of different items can be put into a compost bin, but there is a delicate balance to make the compost develop best. There are "greens" that have a considerable amount of water and "browns" that are relatively dry. Balancing the two will keep your decomposers happy and prevent the formation of mold. The following is a short list of do's and don'ts (a complete list can be found at the NYC Compost Project website at www.nyccompost.org):

The following is a short list of these items.

The list in its entirety can be found at the NYC Compost Project website at www.nyccompost.org

DO NOT PUT IN THE BIN	PUT IN THE BIN	Browns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat litter and dog waste • Dairy products • Fish and meat scraps • Fats, oils, and grease • Invasive weeds • Weeds with seeds • Diseased plants • Dead animals • Sand • Glossy or colored paper • Large branches • Coal and charcoal ash 	<p>Greens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable scraps • Coffee grounds • Tea bags • Dry grains • Fresh leaves and green plants • Grass clippings • Flower bouquets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry leaves • Nut shells • Corn stalks • Straw and hay • Newspaper • Shredded paper • Egg shells • Old potting soils




So, why compost? For starters, it produces a wonderful, nutrient rich soil that you can use in gardens and houseplants. It also reduces the amount of waste that is produced and needs to be shipped to other states' landfills, thus reducing the amount the city is paying to do this. And if you're into it, you can find a whole variety of decomposers such as beetles, millipedes, centipedes, sow bugs, and many others. A compost bin opens up a whole new world for discovery.

Should you not have a place for a compost bin, or are unwilling to haul your food waste to a community garden, don't worry, you can start a worm bin! Worms are wonderful little creatures that will eat 1/3 of their weight in food scraps every day. Worm bins can be easily kept in a small apartment as they don't take up a lot of space. Simply add some water, don't let them get too hot or cold, and keep feeding them fruit and vegetable scraps. After a little while, you will have worm castings to add to your potted plants or garden.

Oh, and don't worry, neither the compost bin nor the worm bin smell bad. They are both easy to keep, and reduce the amount of waste we throw away.

Check out the website at www.nyccompost.org or visit the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation website at www.nyc.gov/parks to view opportunities to learn more about composting and recycling.

 Join the Urban Park Rangers to learn more about **composting**. See the calendar for details.

- Staten Island July 6 Blue Heron Park
- Staten Island September 7 Blue Heron Park

© Photo: www.joalmorris.com

Sustainability

By David Hurd, Director of the Office of Recycling Outreach and Education for Council on the Environment of NYC

In July 2006, the City Council passed Mayor Bloomberg's landmark Solid Waste Management Plan to improve the way the City manages solid waste after the closing of the Fresh Kills Landfill in 2001. The plan's benefits include reducing the environmental impacts associated with shipping solid waste by truck, the adoption and enforcement of borough self-sufficiency in the handling of waste, and a renewed emphasis on recycling and waste reduction.

The Office of Recycling Outreach and Education (OROE), a program of the Council on the Environment

of New York City (CENYC), was created as part of the Solid Waste Management Plan in order to implement a grassroots, community district approach to recycling education. OROE provides "hands-on" outreach to promote reuse, waste prevention, composting, and recycling with the goal of increasing public awareness of, and participation in, New York City's residential recycling program. The Office of Recycling Outreach and Education is also expanding opportunities to recycle materials that are not currently designated in the City's residential recycling program.

Each day in New York City twelve thousand tons of waste is collected from residents, delivered to transfer stations, loaded on to long haul trucks or rail cars for disposal in incinerators or landfills in other states. New Yorkers only recycle half of the bottles, cans, paper, and other items that are acceptable in the city's residential recycling program.

Diverting materials from landfills and incinerators reduces greenhouse gasses that cause global warming.

Recycling conserves both natural and economic resources. For each piece of paper, metal can, glass jar, and plastic bottle that is recycled, an equivalent natural resource is preserved. The demand for recycled commodities is rising. Paper, cardboard, metal, and plastic are commanding record prices as feedstock for new products.

The Office of Recycling Outreach and Education offers free services to New York City residents to assist them in creating an environmentally sustainable city. Services include presentations that show how to create effective recycling programs in residential buildings. Visit the Council on the Environment on the web at www.cenyc.org.