

Food Scrap Recycling – Giving Back to Nature

By Sophie Braccini

The Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority will launch a Food Scrap Recycling program in Lamorinda on September 1st. For Bart Carr, composting is second nature. In his Lafayette home the practice allows him to turn food scraps into rich soil amendment for the family garden. Carr is also the Composting Program Coordinator for the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority and has been conducting classes and interviews on the subject across Lamorinda.

The goal of the Food Scrap Recycling Program is to reduce the waste that goes to our landfills and to further incorporate sustainability into our way of life. Residents can collect their food scraps and paper items in small kitchen containers (“pails”) provided by the CCCSWA and then transfer the materials to their Green yard waste carts for the usual weekly collection. Carr has held classes and meetings with Homeowners Associations and the general public to determine which kitchen container would be most user-friendly for the community. The “Norseman Kitchen Container” was chosen by a majority of residents because it closes tightly, avoiding odors. Coming this August, you’ll find your new container perched on top of your green recycling cart with a User’s Guide inside.

You’ll be able to recycle all of your food waste, including fruit, vegetables, breads, cereal, dairy, meat (even bones), coffee grounds/filters, tea bags and food-soiled paper

products (e.g. towels, plates, napkins, pizza boxes and lunch sacks). Items that cannot be composted are plastics, glass, metal, liquids and pet waste. Your kitchen container is designed to fit nicely and unobtrusively in the kitchen. The idea is to make your container readily accessible so it’s easy to recycle food scraps and applicable paper wastes. The container can be hung on the inside of your sink cupboard door, so scraps can easily be discarded during food preparation and cleanup. You can help keep the container odor free by lining it with paper (one of the many uses for an old copy of your Lamorinda Weekly).

Lamorinda will be joining a host of other cities already engaged in the program. For example, in Alameda County about 70 percent of the 378,000 households are participating in this vital program. According to Brian Mathews of Stopwaste.org, “To date, in Alameda County, about 6,500 tons of food residuals and soiled paper are being diverted each year” from our landfills.

Food scraps and food-soiled paper represent the largest unrecycled portion of our residential waste stream. When dumped into nearby landfill, they not only take up room but generate methane gas, a contributor to global warming. By turning food scraps into compost, residents help achieve three vital goals: they save landfill space, they reduce the threat of global warming and they create compost for local farmers and landscapers.

After collection, your scrap food and paper are on their way to the BFI Recyclery on Newby Island in Milpitas. At the facility, the food and paper wastes are combined with other green wastes for processing



Bart Carr empties the pail in the green yard waste cart

through in either a CBI or Diamond Z grinder. Finally, they are deposited in windrows for the final composting process. The composted material is sold to farmers and landscapers for a wide variety of agricultural and gardening purposes. In addition to

supporting a more sustainable way of life, this process significantly reduces the amount of trash you generate; the use of a smaller blue garbage container might just save you a little money in the long run.

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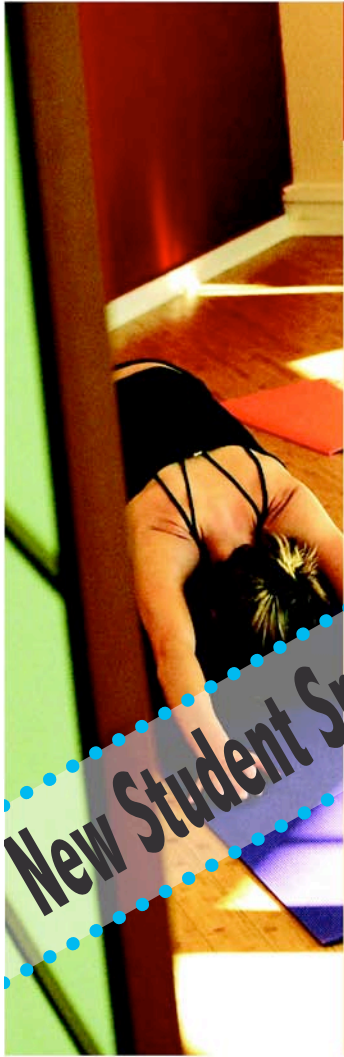
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