

Lamorinda Home Composting: A Diverse and Growing Practice

... continued from page D1



Amber Dyer turns her compost tumbler.

Photos Sophie Braccini

He says that when the mix just looks like dirt and smells like a forest after the rain it is ready; he puts it in bags for use in his Lafayette garden. "Another important aspect is to have enough nitrogen," he adds. "Our way of doing it is by adding some of our chicken's manure to the mix. Nitrogen is what you need for the temperature to rise in the pile and the process to take off." Fromer has chickens, and he even sometimes lets a hen frolic in one of his tumblers, as a treat.



Weeds and clippings turn brown in Dyer's pile.



The children help with composting in the Paykel family.

Fromer started on his own 5 years ago, while Joseph Paykel has a much more recent practice. "I started 7 months ago after attending a free [Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority] compost class," says the young Orinda father. The Paykels looked for a place in their garden that would be the most convenient, "otherwise we would not sustain the practice," he adds. They decided to put the container they bought from CCCSWA by their trash bins, on a concrete pad. "We added corrugated cardboard under it," he says. "Sitting on concrete might not be ideal, but we wanted something close to the house so the practice would be easy." He says that he just spends a few minutes a week taking care of the pile.

Everyone has their own unique system, like Lamorinda Weekly publisher Andy Scheck who added a handful of worms when he started his first compost pile a few years ago. In his Moraga garden, Scheck has two double compost bins, because his vegetable garden is spread between two different spots on his property. Scheck never took a class with CCCSWA, for the native German had been exposed to composting since his youth in his uncle's extensive garden. He built a double compost bin. "In the first bin I start to pile brown garden waste that has been cut small (he acquired a professional chopper), and food waste from our kitchen," he explains. "After a few months, the bottom of the bin is completely composted, so I transfer the top layer to the other bin and can use the finished compost from the first bin." All the composters attribute the wonderful growth of their vegetables and ornamentals in large part to their home-made compost. Most composters have had to face a challenge somewhere along the way. Amber Dyer in Lafayette thinks that her compost hasn't been more successful because not much compost volume was created during the winter, despite the fact that she dumps tons of food waste in it. But looking at the double tumbler she bought at Costco, the result is pretty good.

... continued on page D6