

Project COW

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https://www.reformer.com/local-news/project-cow/article_8f7ebe9a-103d-5851-8399-e550da9f4ca5.html

Recently, I was enlightened to the fact that past generations always referred to their food waste as "garbage" while all other waste was "trash." I suppose that's why garbage disposals were named as such.

In today's solid waste world, we use the term "compostables." The expression is still unrecognizable by computer word programs, but it is acknowledged as an adjective on dictionary.com.

"Compostables" describes all organic waste that decays easily when exposed to moisture, air and microbes -- primarily paper, food and yard waste.

Two months ago, the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) responded to residential concerns regarding Pay as You Throw by offering a subsidized disposal option for compostables, or "garbage."

WSWMD has always offered composting options at their Convenience Center on Old Ferry Road for yard and brush debris. They also sell the largest amount of backyard compost bins during the statewide sales subsidized by the Vermont solid waste districts. But there isn't an on-site processing option for food and yard waste, i.e. wind rows, to help residents divert 23 percent of their waste stream.

Instead, WSWMD is working with Martin Farms in Greenfield, Mass., and Triple T Hauling of Brattleboro to provide a collection container for "garbage" on a trial basis until October. Thanks to funding by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this six-month pilot project to provide a composting outlet for all district community residents is presently free of charge!

WSWMD consists of 19 towns (listed on www.windhamsolidwaste.org). Some of the businesses and institutions in these towns are already taking part in a similar composting program, fittingly entitled Project COW -- Commercial Organic Waste composting.

Project COW is WSWMD's compost education program for businesses and institutions that are interested in contracting with their local hauler to rent a dumpster specifically for non-recyclable paper and food scraps. It is this same program that WSWMD mimicked in May for district residents.

If you utilize the dumpster at the WSWMD Convenience Center on Old Ferry Road in Brattleboro, you will see that it is decorated with splotches resembling the hide of a brown cow, and there is a big sign declaring "Project COW."

The following items can be placed in the COW dumpster:

FOOD SCRAPS: Fruits/vegetables and peelings; bread/rice/pasta/beans; cooked or raw meat, fish and shellfish; cheese and other dairy products; coffee grounds, paper filters and tea bags; cooking oils and fats; egg shells

NON-RECYCLABLE PAPER AND CARDBOARD: Soiled or waxed paper and cardboard; used paper towels, tissues and napkins; cardboard egg cartons; milk and

juice cartons; paper plates and cups; frozen food boxes; sugar, flour and pet food bags (without plastic liners)

OTHER WASTE: Garden weeds; fabric softener/dryer sheets; pet wastes or bedding; small wooden crates.

PLEASE DO NOT COMPOST: Plastic bags, styrofoam and plastic wrap; liquids and trash; plastic utensils, plastic lids and straws; plastic cups and plates; plastic, metal, glass.

This is not your ordinary backyard composting program. The items are processed at a commercial composting farm in Greenfield, Mass. It is amazing how much I have reduced my trash since Project COW became available to residents.

I thought recycling all my paper, bottles, jars and cans, plus using my backyard bin for most of my food scraps made a big dent in my trash can. But now, every time I blow my nose, use a napkin or paper towel, and finish a carton of ice cream, I can compost it! My trash can is less putrid since meat and dairy scraps aren't stewing for days; and, I no longer feel guilty when buying my favorite products that only come in waxed cardboard containers.

I go to the WSWMD Convenience Center with my recyclable paper stacked in my recycle bin; bottles and cans mixed in brown paper bags (also recyclable); and, a 5-gallon bucket for all the non-recyclable paper and food scraps that I don't want to put in my backyard bin. The 5-gallon bucket has a tight lid so I don't have to worry about it spilling in my car when I bring it to the Project COW dumpster. And best of all -- it's free!

Cindy Sterling, WSWMD's program director and educator, has been in the solid waste industry since 1987. For the past 10 years, she has preserved and expanded WSWMD's education and special collection programs through state and federal grant programs.

The monthly Earth Matters column is a collaborative effort of the Windham Environmental Coalition. For input or column guidelines, contact Marcia Bourne at justmart2@myfairpoint.net or Martha Nelson at mhnelson@sover.net.