

Opinion

Recycling food by composting

by Aislinn Dugan
Contributor

Eating food is something the majority of us do multiple times a day. For most of us that means perusing the buffet at good ole Myers Dining Hall. Food is essential to survival, but what about the food that we don't eat?

After a long day of classes, studying, or practice that old saying our eyes are bigger than our stomachs often comes into play. In an ideal situation students would take only as much food as they are able to eat.

Since we can't put back the food that we don't eat due to health codes we have to clear our plates into the trash bins, which are picked up and hauled to the landfill where waste is left to rot and give off harmful gases like methane.

A food waste audit conducted by students at Harvard University found that on average a student wastes over half of a pound of food per day. If these numbers were applied to our campus of over 600 students this would add up to be over 300lbs of food waste per day which adds up to over 30 tons per school year. That is a lot of waste!

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capital of precious resources and watch their value grow.

What is the right thing to do? Should we continue to burn the petroleum that the biosphere and lithosphere joined to create during the last 540 million years so that it is gone within a hundred years?

Or should we cut back on its use dramatically so that generations for thousands of years can continue to develop the fascinating array of useful products made from petroleum?

If we cut back, we don't have to give up driving. We just have to drive greener. Natural energy is easily converted into electricity.

We are at the dawn of the age of the

What about composting? The process of composting involves the break down of organic matter (food waste) by microorganisms present in dirt, into a useable nutrient rich substance (soil). Decomposition and nutrient cycling are essential processes that occur everyday in nature; dead leaves or organisms decompose on the forest floor leaving behind nutrients that fertilize the soil and promote new growth.



The composting of food waste is nature's process of decomposition on a larger scale. For composting to be successful the proper ratio of carbon to nitrogen must be achieved, as well as proper levels of pH, temperature, moisture

and oxygen.

Compost requires the right recipe of ingredients focused primarily on carbon rich material such as dead leaves, woodchips, straw, waxed cardboard (food stained cardboard that is not recyclable=pizza boxes), paper, etc., and nitrogen rich material such as food waste and grass clippings at a ratio of about 30:1.

Once the proper recipe is achieved the pile is left (turned periodically to increase

electric automobile. Battery technology is advancing rapidly. Lithium batteries are the most efficient storage cells.

A new energy market in lithium is emerging rapidly. Countries like China, the U.S., Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina find themselves sitting on large lithium deposits disseminated through the salts of the large dry lake beds in their desert regions. An estimated 14 million tons of lithium reside in these deposits.

Exploitation of these resources will undoubtedly be accompanied by new environmental problems. Fortunately, it is likely that lithium will soon be extracted directly from seawater, where an estimated 230 billion tons are dissolved, a virtually unlimited supply.

aeration) to the microorganisms that break down the waste into nutrient rich soil. The process can be as short as a few weeks up to about six months depending on the composting method.

What about the smell? If composting is done properly (above requirements met) the pile will not give off an unpleasant odor and will smell like a pile of dirt. If the compost does not have enough aeration which means the microorganisms do not have enough oxygen to survive the pile will start to rot and give off an odor. What you smell at the dump is rotting waste that is decomposing anaerobically, or without oxygen. If done properly compost will not only save money but will also provide useful organic fertilizer.

Many colleges across the country use composting as a sustainable way of diverting waste from the landfill, producing usable fertilizer for landscaping, reducing costs of waste removal, raising awareness, etc. Here at Brevard College we have a responsibility to practice environmental sustainability. In order to waste less food we must be aware of how much we put on our plate; we must also be aware of alternative methods of waste recycling and incorporate these methods by establishing composting here at Brevard College.

If you are interested in helping establish composting here at Brevard please come to BC Greens meetings on Tuesdays at 6pm in the MG Lobby. Or contact duganad@brevard.edu.

Any country with access to the sea can become a lithium producer. Lithium can be recycled endlessly so once it is placed in the resource stream it will stay there. Gasoline, on the other hand, is a one-use product and then it's gone.

Do we, as a society, have vision to get us there? The whole promise of a sustainable society is threatened by ineffective people in power quivering in their offices afraid to make a bold move because of what might result, even though inaction will clearly be disastrous.

This is one of numerous great challenges that need to be addressed by the rising generation. The price tag of the transition might be scary but the price of inaction will be much more.