

The Compost Heap

By Betty Bell and
Jean Komaiko
N. C. Botanical Garden

Thousands of articles have been written on the subject of compost, and they all arrive at the same conclusion: compost is simply one way of speeding up a natural process, of accomplishing in two weeks or a year what might otherwise take a decade or much longer.

It haste makes wates, waste can also be made in haste.

In producing compost, almost anything goes. Aerate your heap if you wish, or don't. Turn it if you feel like it, or let it lie. Add lime, or do without. Scraps, scrapings, leaves and litter will eventually break down and become lovely soil. Remember, anything you can eat — once broken down — can be used by plants. (However, if you put out meat, you will attract dogs, raccoons, rats and foxes, none of which you will want in your garden)

A compost heap is ideal for the frugal and for scroungers, because whatever is free can be used. Make new friends among people with chickens, horses, cows and pigeons. When you have finished with the Sunday Times, don't toss all that newsprint in the trash, shred it up and use it on your compost heap. Corn silk, cobs, seaweed from the salt hosed off, grass clippings, sawdust (better rotten)... well, nearly anything organic will do. Pine needles, which are very acid, should perhaps be used directly on your azaleas and blueberries.

The experimental gardener tries anything. If you have an old blender around, use it to break up peanut shells, egg shells and the oyster shells fed to chickens. The smaller the particles on your pile are, the faster the microorganisms will break them down. Sawdust rots faster than a log will; chopped leaves decay faster than whole ones.

You might consider burying worn-out leather shoes in the garden. Some people claim that, in time, shoes and other leather goods will break down into nutrients for the soil. Perhaps you'll become a fanatic gardener who will take a trip to the coast and bring back a bag full of fish heads, shrimp shells and seaweed. Or you'll return from the mountains with a load of bark and mulch from rotting fallen

trees. If you have diseased plants and worry about introducing insects into your heap, burn the plants along with large branches and twigs, and then use the ash. Likewise, if you have an old bone — and don't have a dog — hide it in your fireplace. It too will burn up, and the potash you get will be free.

The fine art of composting probably started in India with Sir Albert Howard, who concocted the Indore method. Sir Albert taught people to dig a shallow pit, wider than it was deep, and to use twigs or bricks at the base to allow air to circulate. He layered the contents of the pit like a sandwich, threw dirt on top, added water and let the organic material cook. In a year he had glorious soil.

Some of Sir Albert's rules still hold. Compost does break down faster when air circulates around it. It must be damp, attaining the consistency of a sponge, so you would be wise to build your heap near a source of water.

A pile of compost gets enormously hot (you can try measuring the inside of the pile with a candy thermometer), and earthworms cannot survive the heat; so add the worms if you will, when the pile begins to cool.

But the Indore method is only one of many ways to compost. There are gardeners who put weeds in a plastic bag, water them, seal the bag loosely, put it in the sun, and wait a few weeks. Composting can be done inside a decaying tree stump, or in a kitchen jar with a lid, or in seven boxes in the basement, one for each day of the week.

Following the method used at the N. C. Botanical Garden, you may wish to heap up a mountain of leaves, let the rain run down into it, let the sun shine on it, and, eventually, let the worms work through it. You'll get good compost that way, too.

If you're the active kind and want some cardio-pulmonary activity, quit jogging and start turning the compost pile instead.

(Editor's note: "The Compost Heap" is the third in a series of articles prepared and furnished by the N.C. Botanical Garden and the News Bureau of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

The oldest continuously inhabited city in existence is Damascus in Syria.

Culbreth-Cobb



Mrs. Michael Russell Cobb

Miss Judith Anne Culbreth, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. J. David Culbreth formerly of Tryon, was married Saturday to Michael Russell Cobb, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. R. Cobb, Jr. of Charlotte, N.C. The Reverend Donald Davis performed the ceremony in Saint Paul United Methodist Church in Charlotte. A reception, hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Paul C. Culbreth of Landrum, S.C. followed the ceremony at the Sheraton Center, Charlotte.

The bride attended UNC-Chapel Hill and graduated from Guilford Technical Institute in Greensboro. She is employed as a dental hygienist in the offices of Dale Finn, DDS and Bruce Lyon, DDS both in Greensboro.

The bridegroom graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill with a BS degree in business

administration and from Florida State University with an MBA. He is employed as an assistant vice-president with North Carolina National Bank in Burlington.

The bride was given in marriage by her uncle, Paul Clinton Culbreth. She was attended by her sister, Joyce C. Correll, of Concord and Terri Rebo of Greensboro, honor attendants; Cynthia Cresenzo of Winston-Salem, and Paula Petty cousin of the bride, of Landrum, S. C. bridesmaids. The bride's cousin, Elizabeth Petty served as flower girl.

The bridegroom's father was best man. His brother, Bradley Cobb of Charlotte ushered along with Donald "Chip" Owens of Matthews; Larry Correll and the bride's brother, Jim Culbreth, both of Concord. Johnny Petty, the bride's cousin was ringbearer.

After a wedding trip to the Bahamas, the couple will make their home in Burlington.

Green Creek Little League

TUESDAY

Red Sox at Indians
Yankees at Giants

THURSDAY

Giants at Red Fox
Indians at Yankees

Until the real ones come, enjoy hummingbirds on a door mat from THE TACK SHOP. adv. 22, 23, 26, 27c.

THIS IS THE LAW

Sponsored by The Lawyers of North Carolina
WAGE EARNER PLANS

People usually think bankruptcy requires the debtor to lose his property — or most of it. However, that is not always the case.

A certain kind of bankruptcy, called a "wage earner plan", is designed to allow a person to pay his debts out of his income and keep his property.

Typically, a wage earner plan provides that the debtor will make payments over a three-year period, although the

Bankruptcy Court may permit up to five years.

The debtor must have a regular income, out of which he will pay a specified amount through the court for the benefit of his creditors. The court will not require him to pay more of his income than he can reasonably afford.

A person feeling overwhelmed with debts may find it helpful to investigate the relief available through a wage earner plan.