



Composting Kitchen waste

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Food scraps and food soiled paper is the largest single item in our waste stream - making up approximately 50% of what we throw away. Food scraps are a resource, not a waste. By participating in the food scrap recycling program, food scraps and food soiled paper are sent to a composting facility. Instead of taking up space in the landfill, your food scraps become compost - a valuable resource used by landscapers and farmers.

Compost is the single most important supplement you can give your garden soil. Composting is a simple way to add nutrient-rich humus which fuels plant growth and restores vitality to depleted soil. It's also free, easy to make and good for the environment.

Composting Benefits

1. Soil conditioner. With compost, you are creating rich humus for lawn and garden. This adds nutrients to your plants and helps retain moisture in the soil
2. Recycles kitchen and yard waste. Composting can divert as much as 30% of household waste away from the garbage can
3. Introduces beneficial organisms to the soil. Microscopic organisms in compost help aerate the soil, break down organic material for plant use and ward off plant disease
4. Good for the environment. Composting offers a natural alternative to chemical fertilizers
5. Reduces landfill waste. Most landfills are quickly filling up; many have already closed down. One-third of landfill waste is made up of compostable materials

My Experiment with Earth

Right here in the UAE, I began experimenting with composting my kitchen waste and over the past four years it has been a successful experiment enriching the soil in my tiny garden. As a vegetarian there is a lot of consumption of vegetables and fruits at home. I began searching for ways to effectively recycle the leftovers and the peels, discarded parts of the fruits and veggies when I came across the queen of Daily Dump in Bangalore - Poonam.



Difficulties of Kitchen Waste Composting

1. Kitchen Waste Composting is mostly "green"

In the green/brown (or the nitrogen/carbon) equation of a compost pile, kitchen waste is considered mostly green. It needs carbon to balance it out, and often in an urban area, carbon is in short supply. If you don't have a yard with lots of woody garden clippings, or a big pile of leaves left from fall cleanup, where do you get your brown?

One solution is to buy it. Many gardening stores carry straw bales and you can build a pile or fill your tumbler with a bucket of straw every time you put a bucket of kitchen scraps in. You can use shredded newspaper for carbon. The newspaper should be shredded and crumpled to keep from becoming a matted mess, but scrap paper would do it. Or junk mail. Or cardboard. Plus this keeps this paper out of the landfills.

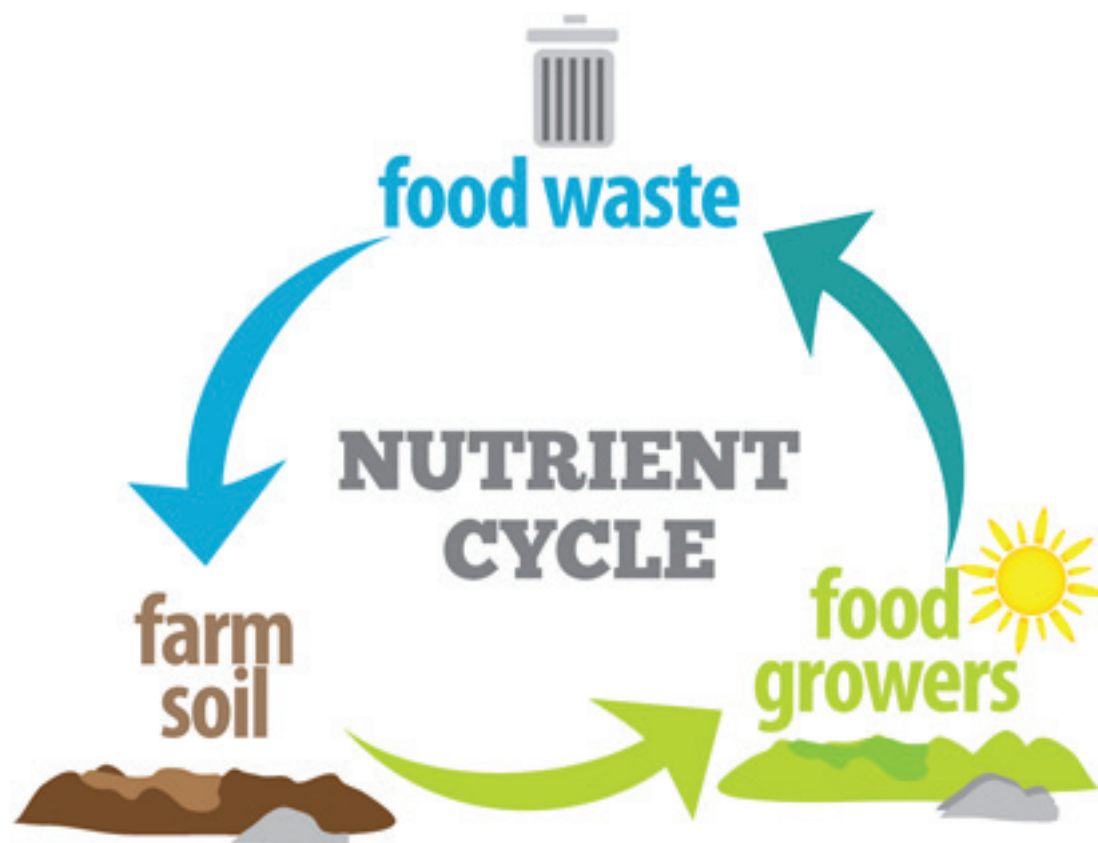
2. Kitchen Waste Composting is Wet

Kitchen scraps are very wet and as they start to decompose, they produce even more water. This water can overwhelm a barrel or worm bin system, or any pile that is not set up to drain well. Let your garbage sit in its own water and you have 'aroma de dumpster.'

You have to have kitchen waste drain. Whatever kitchen waste composting system you use, make sure it drains.

3. Kitchen Waste Composting Attracts Pests

Pests, both big and small are potential companions for a compost pile made of kitchen scraps. The small pests like fruit flies and flies are best deterred by making sure that all the scraps are buried completely in whatever system you use. Since your pile needs air to decompose, know that insects will have no problem finding your morsels. You may be able to keep flies to a minimum by covering your pile with a screen. But fruit flies can find their way into the smallest cracks, so plan on burying your scraps COMPLETELY, at least 6' below the soil level. Insects are part of the team that decompose your garbage, so if possible, place your pile where you won't care if they arrive.



Ten tips for domestic gardeners.

We can make a difference by ensuring that every available space in our front and back garden contains planting, and that we carry out sustainable practices

1. Plant a tree to provide shade and evapo-transpiration, to help cool the air in summer. Fast growing, deciduous trees that require little maintenance also provide maximum benefits in terms of carbon capture.
2. Plant a climber or hedge to provide shade and insulation for your house.
3. Minimize/avoid paving over large areas of your garden, and consider replacing existing impermeable paved areas with permeable surfaces, including vegetation.
4. Plant a variety of plant types and species to support a range of wildlife, example, a mix of trees, shrubs and flowering plants.
5. Grow perennial plants over large areas. As these grow in the same place year after year they minimize annual soil disturbance, helping carbon capture.
6. Consider reducing the area of lawn in your garden, replacing it with other permanent planting.
7. When renewing garden equipment bear in mind its energy and carbon efficiency.
8. Make compost and mulch, covering garden soil with organic matter such as bark to prevent evaporation of water.
9. Collect rainwater and use 'grey water' (previously used for washing dishes, baths etc and suitable for small scale, short-term use).
10. Think 'right plant, right place' to minimize water use and maximize energy saving and energy capture.

Courtesy: Royal Horticulture Society, UK

