



CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA
SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY

SCHOOL RECYCLING PROGRAM

How to Collect Food Waste and Compost— A Step By Step Process

Here's the Concept: Collect school lunchroom food scraps one or more days and place waste in worm bins or compost bins for decomposition and production of finished compost/worm castings. Collection will not include food prep kitchen waste. Although you may *collect* food waste every day, you may only want to *use* food waste for composting one day a week to start. Lunch scrap collection for composting can be easily integrated with an existing school garden project since gardens may already have compost bins. Composting (Rot!) student food scraps with school garden waste is a powerful teaching tool!



1. School will need worm boxes and/or compost bins for processing waste. Capacity should ideally be 2 to 3 standard size "home" compost bins and/or 2-3 thirty gallon or larger worm bins.
2. Use two or more 5 gallon buckets (with carry handles) for food collection. Children can decorate but they must be clearly marked for lunch scrap composting.
3. Get the students involved in the education and collection of the food waste. Lunchtime recycling is challenging because there are numerous materials to recycle – empty milk cartons, cardboard, clean paper bags, aluminum, plastics #1 & 2 – all go together. Adding food waste with its own specifications adds another layer of education. Some schools designate three students to help – they provide three different colors of t-shirts or aprons, each of which represent trash, food waste and recyclables. A student or students stand by each of the collection containers and show other students where to throw their waste/recyclables. Handmade posters in the multipurpose room also help to remind students how to recycle.
4. Use signage and adult direction to train students on what can be "used" for composting. Acceptable scrap materials include: fruits, vegetables, bread, rice. -

NOT ACCEPTABLE: meat, cheese, peanut butter, pasta or anything with protein, fat, or processed sugars!

5. Recruit parent/teacher volunteers to help with collection and compost bin maintenance - janitorial staff usually are too busy to help and should not be responsible for composting.
6. Use of multiple compost bins or combination of compost and worm bins creates greater capacity. When using compost bins, food waste MUST ALWAYS be buried in garden waste so no food waste is left exposed. Exposed food waste will attract flies and other pests! If additional "yard" waste is required to cover food waste, get grass clippings and other school landscape waste from the school landscaper. Compost bins must occasionally be turned to aerate.

When adding food waste to worm boxes, make sure to add food waste directly next to the worms, not on top of shredded paper! Cover with 2-3" layer of moistened shredded paper. Keep compost bins and worm boxes moist for optimum decomposition.

7. Decomposition rate for soft food scraps is much faster than woody yard waste so the food will disappear in a week or so in either the compost bin or worm box (given correct conditions for composting). Faster decomposition of food waste creates more space for the addition of new waste when it is collected!

Resources:

Home Composting for Busy People! Workshops or DVD instructional Videos (both free) – Includes a short video on school composting produced by Orinda Intermediate School students! Visit www.wastediversion.org or call 925-906-1801

FREE Compost in the Classroom Workshops for K-6 students in CCCSWA service area - Reservation required at 925-906-1801.

Gardens at Heather Farms has FREE in-classroom instruction on composting and vermicomposting. Contact: www.gardenshf.org or info@gardenshf.org . (925) 947-6712.