

Earthworms change waste to fertilizer

Wigglers linked to man's salvation

By SHIRLEY KRAUS
Of the Emerald

Charles Darwin knew it. Solid Waste Resources, LTD knows it and after you read this article, you'll know it, too — the future's in worms.

That's right, worms. Red Wigglers, to be exact; more commonly, the earthworm. As Bruce Eder, marketing director of Solid Waste Resources, LTD (SWR) told the Rubicon Society Thursday "Charles Darwin predicted it. This is how the lowly earthworm can be linked to the salvation of mankind."

In 1977, the United States generated at least 300 million tons of human sewage, according to the National Science Foundation. It costs \$2-3 billion to dispose of the waste.

"Everywhere along the way we are paying the price for ineffective ways of disposal," Eder said.

But, Eder says there is a solution. This spring will mark the completion of SWR's first factory. Incorporating the Earthworm Recycling System, the factory will use 42 tons of worms to change biodegradable waste into fertilizer. In this way, Eder said, two major problems, waste disposal and scarcity of usable fertilizer, will be solved.

The process works because earthworms can consume their weight of biodegradable waste each day and excrete "castings", high quality fertilizer. The use of this fertilizer has been shown to increase crop yields by 40 percent. It also cuts down the need for natural gas, used in the production of synthetic fertilizers, by 70 percent.

SWR bases its system on a similar one being used in Japan, where nine such factories exist with eight more pending construction. The factory in Eugene will occupy 15 acres. Employing seven to nine people, the 20 worm-bed factory will be able to turn 1,000 tons of waste into 350 tons of castings monthly. This may seem like a lot, but Eder predicts the Eugene area would need three 3,000-ton factories to handle the waste known to exist.

The factory will also serve as "home base" for the Earthworm Recycling System in the United States. Eder predicts the construction of 913 such factories in the country within ten years. Employees will come to Eugene for training.

As well as handling waste in the factory, SWR will also build plants for private businesses. Twenty-three commitments have been made so far. Gross sales will amount to \$9 million in the first year of operation, Eder said.

Public response to SWR has been good so far according to Elder. Despite the \$1.5-2.5 million capital investment necessary, Eder said SWR has turned down various offers from the government and private enterprises. Offers to buy stock in SWR have also been refused, for lack of need. Watch out, everybody's after the worms.



People have squeezed into everything from Volkswagens to phone booths so what's the next logical step? If you said bathtubs you're right.

On Feb. 22 the University YWCA will conduct a "bathtub squeeze-in" in the EMU Ballroom from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Squeeze winners will be recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records, according to Frank Giannino, who is organizing the event. Each member of the winning team will also receive a free dinner at the Spaghetti Warehouse.

University students, faculty and staff are invited to participate in the fund-raiser.

Teams must have at least 20 members, male and female, and early registration is requested. A 50-cent registration fee is required.

All proceeds will be contributed to the University YWCA programs, including the Big Brother/Big Sister programs, the Exceptional Friendship program, the Handicapped Swim program and various others.

So what exactly is a squeeze-in? Giannino says it's "basically what it sounds like, squeezing as many people as possible into a bathtub and staying there for at least 20 seconds. Other than that there aren't any rules except that all entrants must be 18 years or older," he says.

Anyone interested in participating should stop by the YWCA office on the ground floor of the Student Health Center or call 686-4440.

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March 1 is the application
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The application forms are
available in the rack located near
the receptionists window at the
School of Music office.

Auditions for currently enrolled
students will be Thursday, April
13. Auditions for high school
students will April 8, at Central
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