

EARTH DAY

Composting program helps campus

Composting...it just makes sense. That's what University groundskeepers John Anthony and Rickie Birran tell people when they talk about the pilot-turned professional composting program they developed three years ago on campus.

"It takes minutes and saves a lot of time and money," Anthony said. "And besides, the plants like it just as good and we can use it more generously."

This "generosity to the plants" is actually yard waste collected from plants and turf around campus that has been converted into organic compost and reintroduced to the soil — thanks to an innovative composting program that is now in full motion.

Currently, all leaves, branches, twigs and other yard debris collected on campus that is suitable for compost is transported to the Physical Plant and placed into piles. Once the piles are large enough, they are spread into separate berms and "turned" three times periodically to mechanically break down materials in the soil.

Once the piles are broken down, they are assessed by Anthony and Birran and moved to a finished pile where other groundskeepers pick up the finished compost for use back on campus.

"We used to have to go get this same material off-site and it was very expensive and time-consuming," Anthony said. "This process takes minutes and saves a lot of time and money because before this, we had to take all the yard waste straight to the landfills."

The entire composting process for each pile takes between four to eight months for completion,

depending on the season, weather and how much time Anthony and Birran can devote to it when they aren't off doing other duties for the Physical Plant.

Tim King, campus and grounds supervisor, estimates that by utilizing the composted yard waste instead of purchasing the same material from off-campus processing centers, their composting program is saving the University about \$7,545 annually.

"We haven't had to buy anything," King said, "but we do have to spend time on manual screening. But at this point, it wouldn't be economically feasible to purchase any screening machinery."

Anthony and Birran now have to remove any debris, large sticks and other non-degradable material manually from the yard waste that is brought into the Physical Plant, yet they both say the finished product is worth the effort.

"We have a finished product that we're putting to good use that makes a great soil amendment and can be used as a top dressing for flower beds around campus everywhere," Anthony said.

"It's a learning time too," Birran added. "John is teaching me a lot and we learn as we go. It's pretty rewarding."

The finished composted material they produce is being utilized throughout the campus as a pre-plant soil amendment for trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials and bulbs, as well as topdressing around fibrous rooted plants such as ferns and rhododendron.

King said he believes the plants are responding more favorably than with previously used commercial products, which reduces

LANDFILL COSTS

A record of the cost to processes the yard debris created by the main campus area (about 230 acres).

YEAR	ANNUAL COST
- 1980	Free
1980-89	\$2320
1989-93	3915
1993 -	5945
Starting 3/95	6815

Net Annual savings from the Composting Program is projected at \$7545

SOURCE: Physical Plant

EMERALD

the need for commercial fertilizers and improves soil structure and drainage, enhances root development, reduces fertilizer leaching and increases summer drought tolerance.

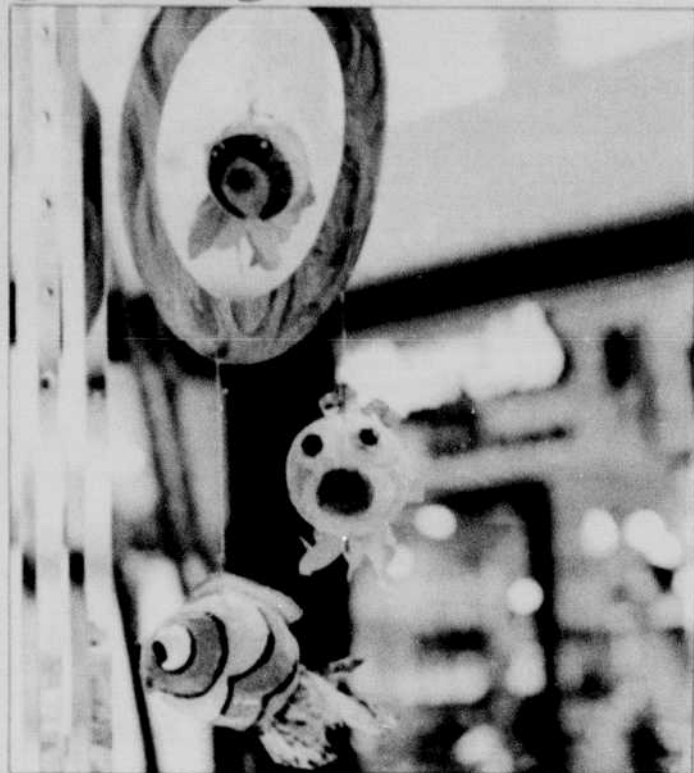
"It's pretty amazing what we do with just two people doing everything," King said. "All that we've done we've figured out on our own, although Karyn Kaplan has worked with us and has been a tremendous help."

Kaplan, who is the University's recycling program manager, said she's more than pleased with the compost program's success herself.

"I'm thrilled to pieces with the progress we've made and it has kept a lot out of landfills," she said. "We're even ahead of the game because yard material is usually one of the last items to be recycled."

— Lori Bettineski

gARTbage



NATALIE MONTGOMERY/EMERALD

The "gARTbage" art show will be on display through Saturday, April 22, at Valley River Center.

The gARTbage show celebrates the creativity of artists and highlights the potential of recycled materials.

The show is an all-comers, non-juried event. It is sponsored by the St. Vincent dePaul Society of Lane County and other local businesses. All of the art displayed must be made of at least 90 percent recycled items.

Last year's show included more than 100 student, amateur and professional entries. Prize-winners participated in the Eugene Celebration and the Oregon Association of Recyclers Convention. Winning entries included a papier-mache dragon, a bowl made of window pane glass, and a large welded sculpture by an Elmira student.

Winners from this year's show will have the opportunity to display their art at the St. Vincent dePaul Society's Western Regional Convention this summer.

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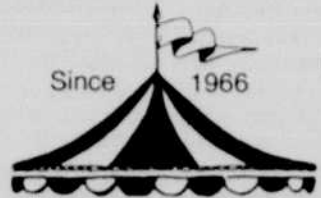
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