

City Composting Program

by Kim Bossé

The concept of composting organic materials certainly isn't unique to the 20th century. I remember my Aunt Dorothy and Grandmother enriching the soil of their gardens with kitchen greens, coffee grounds, eggshells, grass clippings and kelp long before my generation became environmentally active. After a few decades of hibernation, composting is again receiving attention as an option to chemical fertilizers. It is also a major method of waste stream reduction. Biorecycling or composting turns organic waste into humus, which is the organic component in soil. Applaudably, the City of Cannon Beach is implementing the first civic composting program in the county. Joe Balden, City Parks Specialist, developed a comprehensive site plan and program proposal for the composting area which will be located at sludge cell C at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Approval and modification of the composting proposal were made by the City Public Works Department, Energy Committee, Public Works Committee, Budget Committee and the City Council. The State approved the concept and development of an access road with appropriate attention being paid to the wetlands.

In August the City purchased a \$15,000 chipper. The chipper can handle woody material up to 8" in diameter and chips approximately 10 cubic yards an hour. It has a payback period of 3-4 years due to the reduction in costs to operate the burn pile and fees to have a sub-contractor haul the ash to the landfill. Using the chipper will limit the use of the burn pile to only large woody products like stumps. The chipper and compost pile will help to eliminate the on-going problem of dumping yard debris over banks, on to the beach and on undeveloped lots.

At this time 80% of the wood waste & compost materials received are from landscapers. The City in conjunction with the landscapers is researching the feasibility of assessing a tipping fee to local landscapers. The fee would help off-set the expenses incurred in the program and still be less expensive to landscapers than hauling debris to the landfill.

The City of Gearhart applied for and received a multi-jurisdictional DEQ grant in 1994 to research and develop an area wood waste handling program for the communities of Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach. After processing, the chipped materials have a variety of uses; mix for compost, as a base for raised garden beds, pathways, and mulch for moisture retention and weed control.

Composted materials are generally used as an organic garden fertilizer. Pesticides contained in materials put into the compost pile are reduced by leeching and biodegradation, therefore creating clean compost.

How can we residents take advantage of this program? Easy!! All we have to do is bring our materials to the site. At this time the site is open on Saturdays between 10AM & 12PM and 4PM to 4:45PM. The materials that can be chipped are woody yard debris. Compostable materials include: kitchen greens, grass clippings, weeds and organic garden materials. The general rule of thumb is, if you can't grow it in dirt, it can't be composted or chipped. Please be conscientious and only bring materials that can be composted. The success of this program will depend on how well we use it. Building materials, non-organic garbage, and paper products are not acceptable. For more information contact Dan Elek at City Hall; 436-2045.

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JIM KINGWELL

POST OFFICE BOX 382
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I KISS AND THAT IS WHY I CELEBRATE AND
YOU SHOULD CELEBRATE WITH
ME

WILDLIFE ON THE EDGE OCTOBER 1994

Old Man's Beard is a bushy lichen with hairy abundant branches. It gives a tree a very decrepit air, as if strewn with living spider webs.

Bats have long been avoided and maligned for their weird, otherworldly looks and habits. But no flying mammal catches more bugs, produces better fertilizer, or has spawned more literary speculation than these fascinating little creatures.

The Himalayan Blackberries have terracious, long-reaching arms, sweet luscious berries, and an overpowering urge to grow.

The Brown Recluse Spider (barely shown at right) is a creature you should hope never to encounter. It lives hidden under the darkest, least probed locations. If annoyed, its bite will cause serious damage.

Like many areas, ours is shyly infested with a population of **Feral cats**, largely due to abandonment and neglect. Gone wild, cats are destructive and nasty, killing for fun and posing a bad influence on good, law-abiding felines.

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