

Compost Happens

A little science improves results in backyard composting

Although it was a wintery March day when we met to chat about compost, Sherry Wellborn greeted me in a straw gardening hat. She was making the point that she wears many hats, including two teaching hats: She is a part-time instructor at LCC and also at Chemeketa Community College. The hat she donned as we got down to business was her city hat. As compost educator in the Eugene Planning and Development Department, she leads hands-on composting workshops in Eugene during spring and fall.

The first thing Wellborn wants you to know is “compost happens.” Leave organic material in a heap and it will eventually be broken down by nature’s many agents of decay to form a pleasant, useful material that’s midway between recently living organisms (plants, mostly) and a mysterious, highly complex soil component called humus. Composting can also be a precise, science-based endeavor that proceeds much faster and yields a better, cleaner and more predictable product. But Wellborn believes more of us should be making compost at home, even if our methods are haphazard.

Home composting reduces the material going to landfills. When it comes to yard waste, Wellborn asks, “Why are we taking debris offsite to be composted somewhere else and then, many of us, paying to bring it right back to our gardens?” There are basically three ways to make compost successfully at home: cold composting; hot composting, which is more demanding; and composting with red worms. Worm composting is the subject of another article in this paper.

If you add materials to your bin or pile as they become available, cold composting is what usually results. The process is slow but quite effective. It won’t kill weed seeds or pathogens, though. A temperature of 131

degrees Fahrenheit is needed to kill dangerous bacteria such as E-coli, and 140 degrees kills seeds. Commercial composters are required to achieve 131 or higher for three days in their giant piles, and most use 150 as a goal. Such hot composting requires a volume of a cubic yard or more of waste, assembled all at one time, with a good mix of materials that provide an appropriate ratio of carbon to nitrogen. It’s often best for casual home composters to put diseased or weedy plant material in the yardwaste bin.

The optimal conditions for making compost, hot or cold, are:

Mix materials for a carbon to nitrogen ratio near 25:1 (see below).

Particle size of 1 to 2 inches. Larger pieces are slower to break down. Avoid uniformity to keep plentiful air space for the microbes and other creatures that actually do the work. A shredder is nice, but Wellborn demonstrates what you can do with a machete!

Adequate air and moisture. Some moisture should trickle out if you squeeze a handful of mix. Water is essential, but too much will fill up those vital air spaces and make a smelly, oxygen-deprived mess.

Turn the pile to fluff it up and maintain aeration. (Alternatively, install in your pile a perforated pipe in the shape of an upside down T with the two lower ends capped. Air penetrates from above.)

Wellborn’s boss at the city, Annie Donahue, recommends that beginners start with stuff that is safe. Don’t attempt to compost meat or cheese, for example. On the other hand, don’t be afraid of compost — just wash your hands. Carbon-rich materials include dead leaves, dried plants, shredded paper and sawdust. Good sources of nitrogen are kitchen scraps and peelings, coffee grounds, spent grain, green plants and grass clippings. For tidy cold



SHERRY WELLBORN

Sherry Wellborn shows how to mix compost

composting at home, Wellborn recommends the familiar black Earth Machine (popularly known as the Darth Vader, and available from BRING) as the best value. It’s more or less rat-proof if you stand it on a piece of hardware cloth.

Wellborn’s latest catch-phrase is “Every leaf left behind.” If you want to compost on a scale that will use up a quantity of leaves, it helps to use manure — preferably from chickens and herbivores only, such as rabbit, llama, horse and dairy manure. Call around for sources — Wellborn points out that manure is a problem for many operations, and they are often happy to give it away. Aged manure is great. Fresh manure is OK, but get it in the bin fast, cover it with a layer of leaves or sawdust, then wash your hands! Store excess manure in covered plastic bins until you have enough carbon rich material to mix with it.

Recipes for mixes to achieve ideal carbon-nitrogen ratios are posted at <http://wkly.ws/11s> Look for “Gardening Links” and click on “Composting Information.” Better still, attend one of Wellborn’s excellent workshops. Just go to the city of Eugene website and search “2011 composting.”

EW

Rachel Foster of Eugene is a writer and garden consultant. She can be reached at rfoster@efn.org

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EVENTS

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SUNDAYS AT EUGENE YOGA Awaken Your Spirit/Intermediate at 9:30 am, Rest & Rejuvenate/Gentle at 10 am, AcroYoga Tues. 7:30pm, beginners welcome-\$5 drop-in. See our website www.eugeneyoga.us for over 30 weekly classes

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR Lane COUNTY Juvenile Department In the Matter of SHAMIA MARIE HEISER, A Child. Case No. 09-033J-01 **PUBLISHED SUMMONS TO:** Gabino Capistrano A motion to establish guardianship has been filed asking the court to establish a legal guardian for the above-referenced child. YOU ARE DIRECTED TO FILE A WRITTEN RESPONSE to the motion NO LATER THAN 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF LAST PUBLICATION OF THIS SUMMONS, specified herein, admitting or denying the allegations in the motion. YOUR RESPONSE SHOULD BE MAILED TO the Lane County Juvenile Department, 2727 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Eugene, Oregon 97401. You are further directed to appear at any subsequent court-ordered hearing. This summons is published pursuant to the order of the circuit court judge of the

above-entitled court, dated March 31, 2011. The order directs that this summons be published once each week for three consecutive weeks, making three publications in all, in a published newspaper of general circulation in Lane County. Date of first publication: April 7, 2011. Date of last publication: April 21, 2011. **NOTICE READ THESE PAPERS CAREFULLY** IF YOU DO NOT FILE A WRITTEN ANSWER AS DIRECTED ABOVE, OR DO NOT APPEAR AT ANY SUBSEQUENT COURT-ORDERED HEARING, the court may proceed in your absence without further notice and ESTABLISH A GUARDIANSHIP for the above-named child either ON THE DATE AN ANSWER IS REQUIRED BY THIS SUMMONS OR ON A FUTURE DATE, and may make such orders and take such action as authorized by law. **RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS** (1) YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED BY AN ATTORNEY IN THIS MATTER. If you are currently represented by an attorney, CONTACT YOUR ATTORNEY IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIVING THIS NOTICE. Your previous attorney may not be representing you in this matter. IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY, and you meet the state’s financial guidelines, you are entitled to have an attorney appointed for you at state expense. TO REQUEST APPOINTMENT OF AN ATTORNEY TO REPRESENT YOU AT STATE EXPENSE, YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY CONTACT the Lane County Juvenile Department, 2727 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Eugene, Oregon 97401, phone number 541/682-4754, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. for further information. IF YOU WISH TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY, please retain one as soon as possible. If you need help finding an attorney, you may call the Oregon State Bar’s Lawyer Referral Service at (503) 684-3763 or toll free in Oregon at (800) 452-7636. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTED BY AN ATTORNEY, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH YOUR ATTORNEY AND TO KEEP YOUR ATTORNEY ADVISED OF YOUR WHEREABOUTS. (2) If you contest the motion, the court will schedule a hearing on the allegations of the motion. **ATTORNEY FOR DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES** Katherine M. Blaser, Senior Assistant Attorney General Department of Justice, 975 Oak Street, Suite 200, Eugene, OR 97401. Phone: (541) 686-7973. ISSUED this 4th day of April, 2011. Issued by: Katherine M. Blaser, OSB #824204, Senior Assistant Attorney General.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR Lane COUNTY Juvenile Department In the Matter of BRISON MICHAEL ALLEN GREEN, A Child. Case No. 10-114J-02 **PUBLISHED SUMMONS TO:** Cheri Lynn Green IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF OREGON: A petition has been filed asking the court to terminate your parental rights to the above-named child for the purpose of placing the child for adoption. YOU ARE DIRECTED TO FILE A WRITTEN ANSWER to the petition NO LATER THAN 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF LAST PUBLICATION OF THIS SUMMONS, specified herein, admitting or denying the allegations in the petition and informing the court of your current residence address, mailing address and telephone number. YOUR ANSWER SHOULD BE MAILED TO the Lane County Juvenile Department, 2727 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Eugene, Oregon 97401. You are further directed to appear at any subsequent court-ordered hearing. AN ATTORNEY MAY NOT ATTEND ANY COURT-ORDERED HEARING IN YOUR PLACE. THEREFORE, YOU MUST APPEAR EVEN IF YOUR ATTORNEY ALSO APPEARS. This summons is published pursuant to the order of the circuit court judge of the above-entitled court, dated April 7, 2011. The order directs that this summons be published once each week for three consecutive weeks, making three publications in all, in a published newspaper of general circulation in Lane County. Date of first publication: April 21, 2011. Date of last publication: May 5, 2011. **NOTICE READ THESE PAPERS CAREFULLY** IF YOU DO NOT FILE A WRITTEN ANSWER AS DIRECTED ABOVE, OR DO NOT APPEAR AT ANY SUBSEQUENT COURT-ORDERED HEARING, the court may proceed in your absence without further notice and TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS to the above-named child either ON THE DATE AN ANSWER IS REQUIRED BY THIS SUMMONS OR ON A FUTURE DATE, and may make such orders and take such action as authorized by law. **RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS** (1) YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED BY AN ATTORNEY IN THIS MATTER. If you are currently represented by an attorney, CONTACT YOUR ATTORNEY IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIVING THIS NOTICE. Your previous attorney may not be representing you in this matter. IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY, and you meet the state’s financial guidelines, you are entitled to have an attorney appointed for you at state

EVENTS CALENDAR

MEDITATION OPEN HOUSE
Apr 26th, 6:00 pm
DISCOVERING BASIC GOODNESS
Public Talk-Fri, Apr 29th, 7:00 to 9:00 pm
Program-Sat, Apr 30th, 8:30 to 6:00 pm
100 West Q St., Springfield, OR 97477
Register at www.eugene.shambhala.org
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