

# Blue's News

## Composting—It's in the Bin!

Boise residents are great curbside recyclers... so great that we think you're ready for the next level in waste reduction—composting!

For years, composting has carried the reputation of being labor intensive and difficult...but times have changed! Composting has achieved mainstream status and it's easier than you think!

Let's dive into the world of composting and debunk some of the myths.



### • What is compost?

Compost is the dark, crumbly, earthy material resulting from the breakdown of organic matter. Millions of microorganisms and invertebrates (like bacteria, fungi and worms) help with this process.

### • Why should you compost?

When we remove organic material from our properties, particularly grass and yard debris, we are robbing our soil of the ability to feed and replenish itself. This results in decreased plant health and disease resistance. To compensate for these deficiencies, we tend to use synthetic fertilizers and pesticides which pollute our groundwater. By *composting* your organic materials, you create a nutrient-rich humus that improves soil quality and is one of the best natural fertilizers available.

### • What goes into a compost pile?

Your yard and kitchen are great places to hunt for compost materials. The yard mix is easy—add fallen leaves, grass and plant clippings, and spent garden plants to your compost pile. To minimize the volume of waste



grass you add to the compost pile, try removing your lawnmower bag and mulching the grass directly into your lawn.



From the kitchen you can throw in fruit and vegetable peelings and scraps. Spent coffee grounds and leftover coffee also work well in compost piles by adding necessary moisture. You must be watchful, however, when it comes to food scraps.

### • What food scraps should you leave out?

Meat, bones, fish, fats, oils, egg shells, and dairy products like milk and cheese should NOT go into your compost pile. They cause odors and may attract unwanted animal visitors.



compost

### • Where do you get a bin?

You can purchase a compost bin from your local home improvement store or, for a few dollars and a little effort you can make one at home. Check the Allied Waste or Boise City websites for some simple compost bin plans.

### • How long does it take to make compost?

With no effort except occasional moistening, compost will be ready in 6 months to 2 years.

Chopping or shredding, occasional turning, and maintaining adequate moisture (watering and covering) will produce finished compost in less time.

### • How wet should compost be?

Keep it as moist as a damp sponge.

### • Is there an ideal mix for good compost?

Yes! All organics contain carbon and nitrogen. A standard compost pile is made with **1 part "brown"** (carbon) and **2 parts "green"** (nitrogen). Some common "browns" and "greens" are:

#### **"Browns" (carbon)**

**Hay/Straw**  
**Leaves**  
**Pine Needles**  
**Sawdust/Woodchips/Bark**

#### **"Greens" (nitrogen)**

**Poultry/Cow & Horse Manure**  
**Grass Clippings**  
**Coffee Grounds**  
**Fruit & Vegetable Trimmings**

If you would like extra information, or more support, visit:

[www.compostinfo.com](http://www.compostinfo.com)

You've got the facts, now it's time to "dig-in" to this summer's challenge—composting!

Questions? Contact Rachele Klein at 685-7739 or send an e-mail to: [rachele.klein@awin.com](mailto:rachele.klein@awin.com)



## The Light in the Attic

Have you been replacing burned-out bulbs around the house with energy efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs)? These lights, as well as fluorescent tubes, save energy, but contain a small amount of mercury which can be hazardous.

When these bulbs burn-out, they must be disposed of properly and *never broken or thrown into the garbage* (Allied Waste will not pickup trash containing compact fluorescent lights or tubes). Breaking the bulbs releases mercury into the atmosphere where it is free to contaminate lakes and streams.

Take your burned out CFLs and fluorescent tubes to any of the mobile Household Hazardous Waste Collection Sites in Boise or Ada County's permanent collection facility at the Hidden Hollow Landfill. Go to [www.cityofboise.org/public\\_works/services/solid\\_waste](http://www.cityofboise.org/public_works/services/solid_waste) and click on "household hazardous waste" for a schedule of locations.

Be energy smart and environmentally sensitive—Buy compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) and bring spent fluorescent bulbs and tubes to the household hazardous waste collection site near you!



## Please Flatten Your Plastic!

Did you know that the "PLASTIC" compartment on our recycling truck fills up the fastest? Although the other compartments may only have a small amount of material in them, our drivers still have to head for the recycling center once the "PLASTIC" compartment is full.

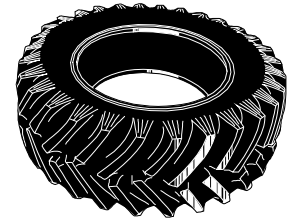
Many plastic containers tend to be bulky (like milk jugs and water bottles) but they are easy to squish. The flatter you can make your recyclables, the more we can fit onto our trucks. Please give it a try...you'll save fuel by preventing unnecessary trips to the recycling center! Thanks!

## Old Tires + Water = Mosquitoes

If you have old tires laying around your yard, you have mosquitoes! Water from snowmelt, rainfall and sprinklers easily accumulates in empty tires and once spring and the high temperature hit... mosquitoes move in!

Birds are the reservoirs for West Nile virus, meaning that the virus multiplies in them. Mosquitoes that bite the birds become infected, and may then spread the virus to humans and animals, such as horses.

Do your part to reduce mosquito habitat and properly dispose of old tires! Your neighborhood tire store may take old tires, and the Ada County Landfill (577-4725) and Western Recycling (375-8580) will always accept them. Fees and restrictions vary so call before loading up and heading out the door!



## "The Healthy Hauler"

Did you know that your trash hauler is at risk every day? All of your trash is hand-thrown into the trash truck...and there are some dangerous materials set out for our drivers to handle!

Please help ensure the safety of our drivers by adhering to the following simple guidelines:

### Broken Glass

Every household generates broken glass at one time or another—broken pictures frames, drinking glasses, windows, etc. To safely dispose of your broken glass, sandwich it between two pieces of cardboard. Tape the pieces of cardboard together with strapping or duct tape and write "BROKEN GLASS" on the outside. If

you have small shards or bulky glass pieces, contain them in a box, tape it closed and write "BROKEN GLASS" on the box.

If possible, place your cardboard box or "sandwich" of broken glass inside your trash to minimize the driver's risk.

### "Sharps"

For residents who are diabetic or have other medical needs re-

quiring the use of needles and syringes, please be sure to contain all of your "Sharps" (needles) in an appropriate container. If possible, use a red "Sharps" container from a medical supply store. Look in the Yellow pages under Medical Equipment & Supplies to find the store nearest you.

If you don't have access to a medical supply store, use a coffee can or detergent jug. Once full, duct tape the lid onto the container and write "sharps" on the outside in permanent marker. Placing the container in your trash can instead of in a trash bag will safeguard against outside tampering or possible needle sticks.

