

Opinion

Sustainable Marblehead: Why Compost?

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Have you ever wondered why some people bother to collect their food waste and turn it into compost? You may think that it's a bothersome, smelly, dirty process that attracts critters and is only meant for a select few crazy gardeners. You may want to think again.

Food waste is not garbage. Your food waste is a valuable resource that has the power to:

- Improve the health of the soil in your lawn and in flower and vegetable gardens.
- Improve the ability of soil to retain water, which benefits the climate.
- Reduce both the amount of waste that goes into landfills and the toxic methane gas it creates.
- Reduce the town's sewer costs. Putting food waste into the disposal requires filtering that costs the town more money and uses more energy.

What options do we have for composting locally?

Thanks to the foresight of our Board of Health, we have more options than ever before, including:

1.

Composting your own food scraps in your yard. Just designate an area of your yard, dig a shallow hole, add vegetable and fruit scraps, cover with a screen, and turn the soil over frequently. Keep your leaves separate because they take longer. To keep the food scraps contained, you can also use a composter that you can purchase from the Board of Health or from another source.

2.

Taking your food scraps to the Transfer Station and putting them in one of the compost bins near the trailer/office. Black Earth Compost empties these once a week. Composting through Black Earth allows you to include items like meat, bones, dairy products, napkins, tissues, wine corks, and more.

3.

Contracting directly with Black Earth Compost and having your food scraps picked up weekly at your home for a fee. The cost is dependent on how many Marbleheaders participate in the program. It currently costs \$99 for six months, but once 300 households sign up (at this time, we need about 75 more households), the cost will be reduced to \$99 a year. Households that participate get two large bags of compost in the spring to use on their lawns and in their gardens. Many North Shore communities already participate in this program. Hamilton has free curbside pick-up of food scraps which began in 2009.

The Marblehead Parks and Recreation Department has a compost demonstration area behind the Getchell baseball field. Sustainable Marblehead and the Board of Health's Recycling Committee also provide information about composting weekly at the Farmers' Market. Last but not least, all Marblehead residents will have an opportunity to learn more about composting and other practices and programs to protect our environment at our community-wide Sustainability Fair on Saturday, Oct. 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Marblehead Community Charter Public School on Lime Street.

For questions or to get involved, please contact us at [sustainablemarblehead@gmail](mailto:sustainablemarblehead@gmail.com) or visit our website at www.sustainablemarblehead.org. You can also visit the Black Earth website at www.blackearthcompost.com or contact the Board of Health at 781-631-0212 or by email at health2@marblehead.org.