

4-2-2009

Compost Conversion

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Compost Conversion" (2009). *News Releases*. 1513.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1513

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



Compost Conversion

04.02.2009 | Energy and Environment A Q&A with UD environmental sustainability manager Kurt Hoffmann:

What material in these bags makes them compostable?

The bags are made from a plastic that is derived from processed corn. They break down in the compost pile just like food scraps and paper products. They have been designed for exactly this purpose.

Is it universitywide, or just in the cafeterias?

- We will only use the bags for composting purposes. If we used the bags across campus it would be a large waste of money. This is because materials do not biodegrade in landfills. It is a common misconception that our trash will naturally break down once it is in the ground. It doesn't because all landfills are sealed to protect groundwater and air quality. It is possible to dig down in a landfill and find readable newspapers from the 1950s. This is one reason to separate and compost our food waste. It becomes usable fertilizer instead of being locked in a landfill.

What about the disposable products such as cups and plates? What about plasticware? What is all that made of?

- As we switch to this composting system, we will also switch all disposable products to compostable ones as well. This includes plastic flatware, carry-out boxes, cups, lids and straws. Some of the items will be made from starches, some from the same corn-based plastic the new bags are made of. All these products will be diverted to the compost. At first, all the compost separating will happen in the dish room. We plan to remove all garbage cans from the cafeterias and have everyone to return their trays and disposable containers at the tray conveyor system. Eventually, after some education, we will put compost and trash bins back in the cafeterias and collect compost from these areas as well.

When does the conversion take place?

- The official conversion will be near the end of this semester. We will work the kinks out of the system over the summer and formally roll it out to the students in the fall. I hope to have some significant composting education built into this fall's orientation program.

Does it cost more than the old stuff?

- The compostable items do cost more than what we currently use. ... Dining services is exploring how to base fees on use. In areas where we have the option to use plates and washable items, the disposables would carry a premium. In areas where only disposables are offered, prices will not change. Shouldering part of the cost for the convenience of disposable products shouldn't be seen negatively. We should all understand that our purchases have an impact on the environment and that costs should reflect this.

What is the effect on the environment?

- It is considerable. First, keeping this material out of the landfill will reduce the amount of gas that landfills generate -- which is more damaging to the atmosphere than tailpipe emissions from cars. Also, compost is a usable soil amendment. Our food waste, plus the compostable products, once composted, will be sold as PayGro fertilizer. The compostable items are earth-friendly as well. They are made from rapidly renewable resources rather than oil. So we save landfill space, reduce oil consumption and prevent the release of greenhouse gas emissions, all while generating a usable product for gardeners and farmers.

For more information on UD's sustainability efforts, see the Sustainable UD (url: <http://campus.udayton.edu/%7efacman/energy/>) Web site.