

## Food to Flowers!

### Lunchroom Composting

We all know about recycling, but have you heard the latest about composting? Governments and schools across the nation are saving money and dramatically reducing solid waste through programs that compost food waste and food-soiled paper (like paper napkins). The items are placed into a large compost bin, where they naturally decompose with the help of micro-organisms, fungi, bacteria and insects.

Using compost in gardens or landscaping adds organic matter, improves the soil structure, replenishes nutrients, and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. When used as a mulch, compost helps prevent weeds and it also helps retain moisture in the soil during hot summer months.



## Make Waste-Free Lunches

The best way to reduce waste from lunches is to simply reduce the amount of waste created in the first place:



- Pack lunches in reusable lunch boxes.
- Put juice, applesauce, yogurt and other food in reusable containers instead of buying single-serve containers.
- Avoid buying packaged lunch kits and overly packaged products.
- Pack metal utensils and cloth napkins.
- Encourage your child to eat his or her entire lunch and to bring home any uneaten useable food (such as apples).

For more ideas, visit [www.wastefreelunches.org](http://www.wastefreelunches.org).

This program is sponsored by Thurston County Solid Waste, WSU Thurston County Extension, Olympia School District and the Department of Ecology, with funding from a Department of Ecology grant. For more information about the Food to Flowers Program, contact Michelle Andrews of Thurston County at 754-3355 ext. 7676 or e-mail [andrewm@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:andrewm@co.thurston.wa.us). For more waste-reduction ideas, visit [www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm).



# Lunchroom Composting

Roosevelt • Garfield • Boston Harbor

## Food to Flowers



Thurston County Solid Waste

# Lunchroom Composting is Coming to Your Student's School



## Food Scraps Get a Second Life



Roosevelt, Garfield and Boston Harbor elementary schools have been chosen to participate in **Food to Flowers** – a lunchroom composting program that recycles leftover food scraps, food-soiled papers and yard waste. It's anticipated that

the new program will reduce kitchen and cafeteria waste by approximately 75 percent! Plus, the compost will be used in the school gardens, thereby "closing the loop."

## Big Benefits for Schools

By composting food waste, schools may:

- Reduce the amount of garbage produced and lower trash hauling costs.
- Give students hands-on experience in composting and resource conservation.
- Raise community awareness about composting and waste reduction.
- Produce compost for gardens or fundraising events.
- Create a more earth-friendly school.



## How It Works

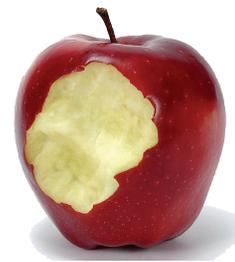
Leftover food and soiled paper from school lunchrooms and kitchens will be placed into large "Earth Tubs" on school grounds. These tubs are much larger than backyard compost bins and can take up to 150 pounds of food waste per day! To view the tub in action, visit [www.kent.k12.wa.us/ksd/CW/DOP\\_Web/earthtub.htm](http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/ksd/CW/DOP_Web/earthtub.htm) or stop by one of the schools during the 2007-2008 school year.

Compost from the bins will be used in school garden beds, which could grow food or flowers for schools.

## Your School Needs Help!

To help make compost at your student's school and/or help in the school garden, contact WSU Thurston County Extension at 786-5445 ext. 7908. Free training is available!

Volunteers are also needed to help make presentations, monitor cafeteria bins, help students track food waste weights, train student monitors and more. To volunteer, contact Thurston County Education and Outreach Specialist, Michelle Andrews, at 754-3355 ext. 7676 or via e-mail at [andrewm@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:andrewm@co.thurston.wa.us).



## Compost at Home

It's very easy to compost food and yard waste at home. In fact, composting food, yard waste and paper towels could reduce your garbage by more than 27 percent! Learn more about composting by using the following resources:

- **Free compost workshops:** For details, call the Alternatives to Burning Hotline at 754-2953, option 3. Another alternative is to click the "free guides" button of [www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm) and choose "Composting at Home."
- **Compost bin sales:** Visit the Master Gardener Foundation Web site at [www.compostbinthurstoncounty.com](http://www.compostbinthurstoncounty.com) or call the Alternatives to Burning Hotline at 754-2953, option 5.
- **General compost information:** Visit the recycling link of [www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm) or call the Master Gardener/Composter clinic at 786-5445 ext. 7908.

