

From the Solid Waste Management Department webpage:

Commercial Food Waste Collection

Orange County Solid Waste Management operates an Organics Recycling Program that diverts about 1,500 tons of food waste and other compostable organic material from landfill disposal each year. Collection and composting service is performed by our contractor, Brooks Contracting. This program accepts source-separated organic materials such as kitchen and produce or meat department prep waste, post-consumer plate waste, and other compostable organic materials from local restaurants, grocery stores, institutions and food service establishments for composting. The finished compost is available to purchase locally at the Orange County Landfill and Southern States in Carrboro.

Home Composting

Why Compost? Composting is recycling! Composting is the natural process that decomposes yard waste and food waste to make a brown, crumbly soil additive that enhances the health of your lawn and gardens. Adding finished compost to soil improves soil texture, helps soil retain moisture, reduces run-off, and naturally increases nutrient content to help sustain healthy plants. Healthier plants are more resistant to pests and disease.

Diverting organic waste from the Orange County Landfill for composting conserves precious landfill space and reduces production of methane from anaerobic waste decomposition in the landfill. Twenty percent of Orange County's waste is food waste.

Anaerobic decomposition of organic waste such as food waste and yard waste in landfills is the #1 producer of methane gas in the United States. When not controlled and simply vented to the atmosphere, methane gas is the most potent of all the greenhouse gases contributing twenty-five times as much to climate change as carbon dioxide.

Home composting also saves the energy used to run waste collection trucks, conserves water in the garden by helping soils retain moisture, and reduces the need for chemical pesticides and fertilizers - all of which save money - and the environment wins as well.

To learn more about the benefits and the process of composting, visit the Outdoor Demonstration Sites in Orange County:

- Orange County Solid Waste Management Office 1207 Eubanks Rd. Chapel Hill
- Community Center (behind the rose garden) on S. Estes Drive in Chapel Hill

Orange County Solid Waste Management provides compost demonstrations several times a year the Outdoor Composting Demonstration Sites. Contact (919) 968-2788 or recycling@orangecountync.gov to find out more about indoor composting using worms or outdoor composting demonstrations.

If your neighborhood, civic group, garden group, or faith-based organization is interested in learning how to compost, you can arrange a class with OC Solid Waste Management staff at one of the demonstration sites or at your location. We also offer assistance in starting a composting program on site.

Web Sites

<http://www.mastercomposter.com/purpose/compost.html>
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/composting-soils/index.asp>
<http://www.cityfarmer.org/homecompost4.html>
<http://www.howtocompost.org/>

How to Compost

There are as many different ways to compost as there are people who compost!

There are four basic ingredients needed to compost: Oxygen, Water, Carbon ("Brown material such as wood chips, brown leaves, or shredded newspaper), and Nitrogen ("Green" wet waste such as grass clippings, or fruit and vegetable scraps from your kitchen). If you have these ingredients, you can compost at your home, office, or school.

For more information on composting methods, visit:

<http://www.mastercomposter.com>

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Organics/HomeCompost/>

<http://www.oldgrowth.org/compost/home.html>

Many people prefer a tidy structure in which to place their organic waste, whether it be a commercially available composting bin or a home-made one. Building a loose pile of leaves, food waste, grasses and brush or digging a hole in the ground to bury the materials are time-honored composting methods as well. Each method has its pros and cons, depending on one's living situation and one's composting goals.

Orange County Solid Waste Management sells compost bins known as the "Earth Machine" for \$50 at the administrative office, 1207 Eubanks Rd. Chapel Hill, Monday - Friday 8:00-5:00. For more information on commercially available composting units visit:

[Earth Machine](#)

<http://www.mastercomposter.com>

<http://www.composters.com>

Composting is not limited to the outdoors. **Indoor composting** using red worms is an efficient method to convert organic waste into wonderful rich compost too, good for houseplants as well as outdoor landscapes and gardens.

For more information on composting with worms, visit:

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Vermi/>

<http://www.mastercomposter.com/worm/index.html>

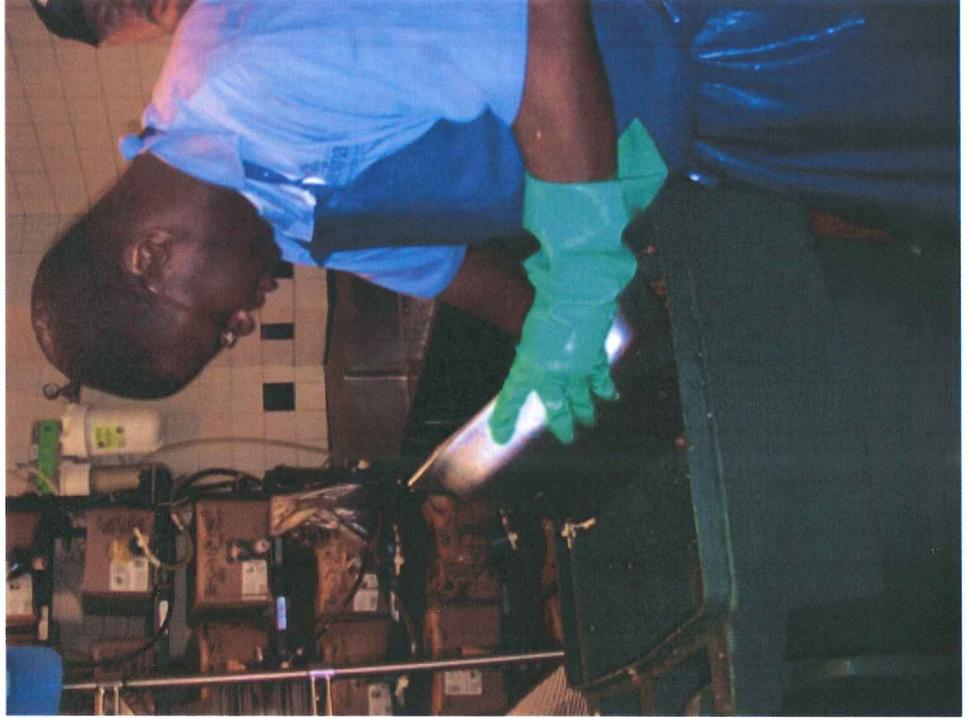
<http://www.wormwoman.com/acatalog/index.html>

The links listed on this page by no means encompass the wealth of composting resources on the World Wide Web. Sources listed here do not represent endorsement of one information resource over the other.



Food Waste

During FY 2013-2014, UNC composted 649 tons of food waste.





THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Brooks Contractors



UNC has composted over
10 million pounds of food
waste since the program
began in 2000.



From the North Carolina Sustainability Connection:

Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools Divert 32,940 Pounds of Trash from Landfill



Credit: Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

Dan Schnitzer's job is to prove that sustainability pays off for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City schools. So far, the numbers are adding up.

A district-wide composting and waste education effort, funded by savings from more efficient dumpster use, has led to these impressive results since the school year's start ten weeks ago:

- 19 bags of lunch trash generated daily by 15 schools, down from 155 last year
- 32,940 pounds of waste diverted from the landfill
- 12.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions prevented
- 2.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions absorbed through creation of compost
- 87 percent reduction in cafeteria landfill waste

When Schnitzer began his role as the school district's first full-time sustainability coordinator last November, a transition from styrofoam to compostable cafeteria trays was already underway with assistance from an organization called [Every Tray Counts](#). This year, all elementary and middle schools became involved, with 8,000 students separating compostable, recyclable, and landfill waste every day in cafeterias across the district.

The transition was an incredibly collaborative process between parents, teachers, students, custodians, food service staff and composting companies, says Schnitzer. Volunteers contributed more than 500 hours during the first two weeks of the school year to get the project off the ground.

Schnitzer has been able to position the composting program as self-sustaining by funding it through cost-savings from a reduction of trash removal inefficiencies.

“We did a dumpster audit to look at how we can be more efficient and saw that we were literally throwing away money,” he says. Like other businesses, schools pay every time a dumpster is picked up. The audit showed that, over a period of weeks, many dumpsters were picked up partially empty. By looking at patterns of use and strategically switching the days of removal, they reduced the number of weekly pick-ups at many schools from three to two, and removed some dumpsters from service altogether. The money saved in the trash line item of the budget was then freed up for compostable waste programming.

Schnitzer, with a graduate degree in Environmental Management and Sustainability, spent six years helping manage an environmental charter school in Chicago. This background, as well as his experience directing an overnight summer camp, taught him about the challenges schools face in balancing priorities with financial, education, and environmental impacts. He looks for ways to save money and then leverage that savings in smarter ways.

“That’s the perspective I bring to this job: an understanding that there are competing pressures and priorities in the district,” says Schnitzer. “Part of the challenge is that changes don’t always benefit everyone. Sometimes things are less convenient or take more time and work.” He tries to figure out what motivates people and frame sustainability in those terms. “It takes a leap of faith to invest money upfront with a spreadsheet for later gain,” says Schnitzer.

While other NC school districts, like Granville County for example, have recycling coordinators, Schnitzer’s role is unique in breadth of reach across the school system. He engages with food service employees, facilities management, teachers, parents, school garden coordinators, custodial staff, and others as project partners.

Schnitzer’s next plans for the school district will target improvement of light and energy use through LED upgrades and better efficiency. “We’re working hard to optimize what we have, by making sure time schedules are set and running properly, and by looking at usage patterns in different areas of the buildings.”

Educational opportunities are even more important than the immediate environmental gains of sustainability initiatives in schools, says Schnitzer. “Parents and teachers are not tangential. If we’re not teaching the kids these lessons, then we’re missing 90 percent of the impact.”

While science class provides a clear opportunity to teach about environmental topics like waste and conservation, lessons of sustainability can be relevant across the curriculum through reading assignments, tasks, and exercises framed around these issues. For example, Schnitzer had the chance to discuss waste management with a graphics design class that created art for the district’s sustainability logo and signage for the composting initiative.

“I believe an entire school curriculum can be built at any grade level around a school garden” says Schnitzer. “Sustainability issues affect everyone.”