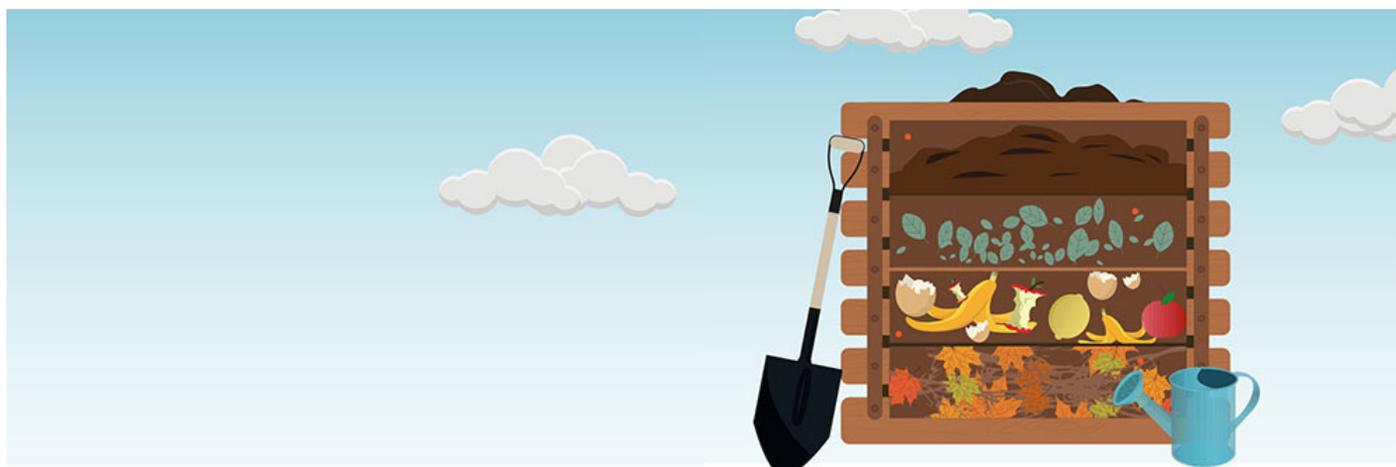


From Table to Farm - An Article on the Importance of Composting



Dave Littere

Dave Littere grew up in the rural part of Western New York and loves outdoor work and activities. Mr. Littere obtained his biology degree from Buffalo State College and moved to the suburbs of Washington D.C. to pursue business opportunities. Dave and his wife Tonya started Future Acres Urban Farming in order to do their part in providing agricultural services and products to both farmers and consumers, while helping shift the American agricultural system in a sustainable direction.



Large-scale farmers make up less than 3% of the population and provide the majority of the food for Americans, and demand has been increasing. There is a way, however, for us consumers to give back to those farmers and help them with the increasing demand. If we were able to collect food scraps and leftovers, we

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process known as composting.

You have probably heard of the term before, but the word compost is just the finished product of a natural and organic decomposition process. Compost tumblers aid local residents in producing their own compost, and once these products (called feedstocks) are collected, they generate large amounts of compost, and farms use this compost as a soil amendment to help grow healthy crops.

The composting process requires four elements: carbon, nitrogen, water, and air. Using food scraps and leftovers is a wonderful source of nitrogen for any compost pile. Collections of these nitrogen sources at farmers market stands, local households, residential buildings, HOA communities, and restaurants, are converted into an organic soil enhancement which helps the crops grow without the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Local farms that are beginning, or are already implementing, regenerative agricultural practices benefit directly from composting efforts. Several compost companies, including Future Acres Urban Farming, donate their compost products to local farmers and urban gardeners, which helps them grow healthier crops. We choose to donate instead of selling our compost because we strongly believe that the American Food System needs revision and that our current practices will not last much longer. I'm sure we are all familiar with the infamous estimate in 2014 by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that there could only be 60 good crop harvests left due to the degradation of soil nutrition, poor agricultural practices, and an increasing food demand. Regardless of the accuracy of that statement, the truth of the matter is that American farms would not be able to provide a third of current food production without chemical assistance in the form of herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers. As you can imagine, the "chemical assistance" lingers on the food we consume.

Healthy soil is a necessity for healthy crops which grow green, resist insects, and outgrow the weeds. Regenerative agricultural practices also eliminate the need for chemicals in farming. Optimizing the natural decomposition of organic materials using simple tools, like a water hose and a shovel goes a long way to eliminate the need for chemical processing in farming. The nutrients, micronutrients, and minerals which are

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decomposed feedstocks makes for an optimal addition to all depleted soils.

The best part about all of this is that your input is super simple yet pivotal to the composting process. All that's required of the consumer is to divert anything that is compostable (mostly food scraps and some paper products) into a collection bin designated for a compost pickup rather than throwing them in a garbage can for the landfill. Ideally, if composting became as mainstream as recycling, we could divert 30-35% of all waste destined for a landfill because it can be composted.

Urban areas are a great opportunity to implement a food scrap collection initiative because of the massive amount of food waste generated from a relatively dense population. Apartment buildings, HOA communities, and urban neighborhoods all offer a potentially wonderful feedstock for a compost pile, the main barrier is a working collection system. Collect and convert as much food waste from your table as possible to return it to the farms!

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