

What is compost?

Compost is a humus-like material derived from the decomposition of organic materials that primarily includes leaf and yard waste, but may include materials such as animal manure, paper and food scraps. Compost has proven to be a valuable soil additive that enriches the soil by adding essential nutrients and organic matter. Incorporating compost in the soil improves soil structure and increases water-holding capacity, saving water in droughts. Compost also reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, which can be both costly for the farmer and a source of pollution in our local streams and rivers.

Support Your Local Farms

In addition to supplying local farms with a source of compost, residents and businesses can further grow efforts to transition to a locally-based food system, by purchasing food from the farms receiving scraps. Making an effort to buy local produce and meats helps strengthen the regional economy and supports the preservation of the Valley's agricultural heritage by making it financially feasible for families to continue operating their farms. Food purchased directly from the farm is also fresher and better tasting. Produce shipped to grocery stores can spend 7 to 10 days in transit alone. Due to the length of transit, fruits and vegetables are harvested before they can fully ripen, which tends to result in a decrease in flavor, freshness and nutrient levels.

For more information or to become involved in the program, contact:



Rodale Institute

<http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/>



Greater Lehigh Valley Chapter of
Buy Fresh Buy Local

<http://www.buylocalgreaterlehighvalley.org/>



Cougle's Recycling, Inc.

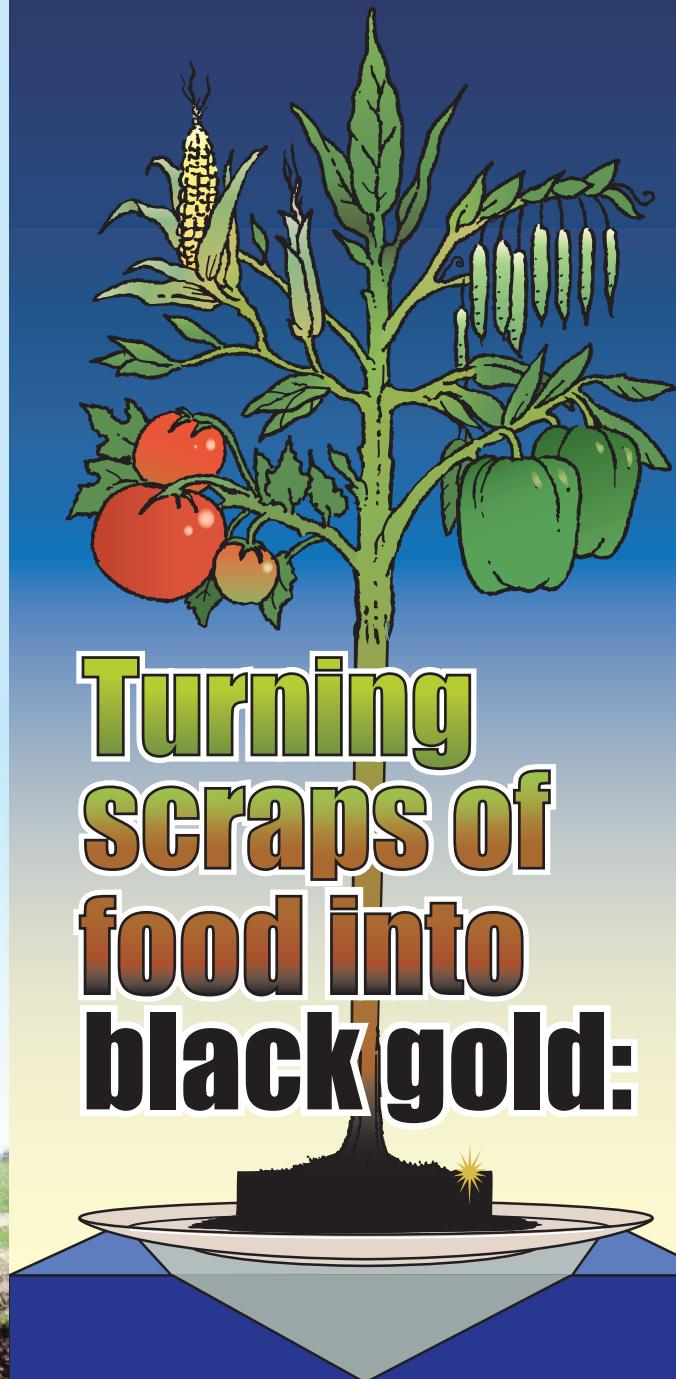
<http://www.couglesrecycling.com/>



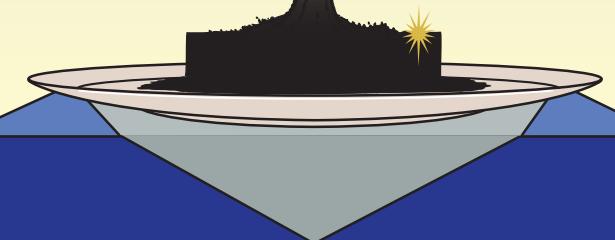
To find local farms near you, check out
www.buylocalgreaterlehighvalley.org

Produced by

Lehigh County Conservation District
www.lehighconservation.org



Turning
scraps of
food into
black gold:



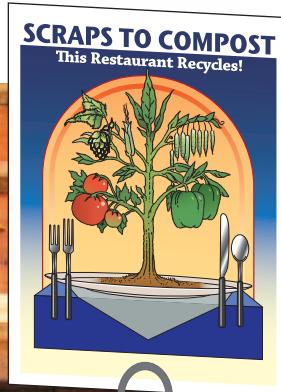
saving money and helping
the environment with
what's left on your plate

BENEFITS

Community

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average person generates 1.35 pounds of food waste per day; across the entire U.S. population, this amounts to 12.5% of the total material entering landfills or over 30 million tons per year. This tremendous volume of material not only consumes limited space in landfills, but through its decomposition, generates methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide.

But the food scraps we casually toss off our plate are actually a significant economic resource. By sending food waste to landfills, Americans are dumping money in their trash. When combined with leaves and other carbon sources, food scraps turn into compost, a valuable soil amendment vital to farmers, gardeners, and landscapers to conduct sustainable operations. A recent trip to a landscaping center finds a 5 quart bag of organic compost costing \$5.00.



What you can do as a citizen:

- Divert your own food scraps and start a compost pile – use this material on your garden or flower beds.
- Frequent local restaurants and farms that are participating. To see who's participating in the Lehigh Valley, check out www.buylocalgreaterlehighvalley.org



Farmers

As a farmer, compost can help improve your crop yield by improving soil fertility and water-holding capacity. Smaller operations need only a front-end loader and a source of leaves to manage a compost pile. Larger operations will require more time and machinery costs, but compost can be sold to create an additional revenue stream, in addition to saving money on fertilizers.

For more information on how to manage a compost operation, check out www.rodaleinstitute.org

To receive food scraps, contact Cougle's Recycling, Inc. at 610.562.8336.



Food Service Facilities

As a restaurant, school district, university, grocery store, or any other facility that prepares food, removing food scraps from landfill-bound waste will reduce your ecological footprint and increase your bottom line. Food is heavy and adds considerable weight to your trash container; by removing this material, many restaurants are able to eliminate a container or downsize, creating savings of at least 30%.

Facilities can begin by focusing on pre-consumer food waste, or the scraps produced in the kitchen, by scraping food remnants into a bucket and later emptying it a 64-gallon tote provided by Cougle's Recycling. This is the easiest step for a restaurant to take, since diverting the post-consumer food waste, or the scraps from customer's plates, adds another level of complexity and the possibility for contamination (i.e., plastic straws). Facilities sorting out both pre-consumer and post-consumer food scraps see the most savings. Despite initial concerns, many restaurants have found that no additional labor was needed.

List of compostable materials:

This list may vary from facility to facility.

- All Vegetable Material
- Meat Scraps (cooked or un-cooked)
- Raw Food Waste (uncooked)
- Coffee Grounds
- Compostable Serving Products
(Chinet, paper, bamboo, palm,
un-waxed, non-glossy)
- Wooden Food Skewers
- Paper Napkins
- Cardboard
- Bones

To discuss service, contact Cougle's Recycling, Inc.