



Composting 101: Help the Environment and Your Yard

By Susan Walker

Have you ever thought about composting – taking leaves, grass and kitchen scraps and turning them into humus-rich soil through aerobic decomposition? Autumn, with all of the fallen leaves, is the perfect time to start. Reasons to compost are: 1) One third of all landfill waste is compostable materials. 2) Compost improves the soil in our yards and gardens. 3) It is good for the environment as it decreases methane gas emissions from landfills and is an alternative to chemical fertilizers that pollute waterways.

Walk through the inner pathways and you will notice that GHI members are already composting in our community. Becky French of 14 Ridge Court has been composting all her life. I asked Becky and her husband, Ben Fischler, for advice on how to start composting.



Donna Hoffmeister of Plateau Place turns her compost pile. Photo by Alonzo Coleman.

1. Start with bare ground, laying twigs, sticks and small branches first – this allows the compost to get oxygen, one of the ingredients needed for composting.
2. Layer brown/dry materials like leaves (shredded is best otherwise they mat together and do not decompose), newspaper (also shredded; no glossy or colored inks), shredded paper, and prunings from shrubs (don't include any diseased plants or weeds with seeds).
3. Layer green/wet materials like kitchen scraps, coffee grounds/filters, tea bags and crushed eggshells. Grass clippings are excellent, but must be in thin layers so they do not mat into clumps. Avoid adding pet waste, meat, fish, dairy products, fats, plastic, Styrofoam or treated wood.
4. End with a brown layer to minimize any odor. Also, adding mulch from Northway Fields or soil from your garden to the top will mask any odors and accelerate the composting process. If your compost has an odor then turn it to add air and also add more brown materials.
5. The rule of thumb according to http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html is one third green to two-thirds brown materials (by volume).
6. GHI requires an enclosed bin and that helps retain heat and moisture. GHI also requires bins to be screened.
7. When adding new material, mix or turn them so that you are aerating the material.

If you start your composting now, Becky and Ben say that you can have good humus for the spring when you start your garden! Composting is easy she says, but it does take time for nature to work.

Don't want to compost by yourself? Members in 60 court Crescent share one compost bin. Consider starting one with neighbors in your court. You can read more about composting at the library or on the Web at places like www.greenbeltmd.gov/documentcenter/view/568 . You can build your own compost bin or purchase one at local hardware stores or online. Luisa Robles, a GHI member and the city's recycling coordinator, can also answer questions at 240-542-2153.

The important thing is: Just do it!



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Three Cheers for Recent Member Events

Jo-Anne Fournier

Recently our own Member Outreach Committee has been a non-stop cheering squad for GHI members, supporting events and reminding us about what a great community we live in.

In September, the committee sponsored the Garden Tour with the Greenbelt Gardeners Yahoo group. There were 15 homes on the tour, 13 of which were in GHI. Over 100 people participated in the tour. Next the committee sponsored the GHI Yard Sale and Plant Swap. Deals could be found on a used baby stroller, clothing for all ages, camping equipment, etc. Proceeds from the sale were used toward the member picnic. The first annual Plant Swap provided members with an easy way to get new plants, bushes, seeds and other garden accessories for free, but the best bargain was the sharing of useful tips on gardening in GHI while people were waiting in line for the event to begin.

On the first weekend of October, the committee was at it again supporting the annual GHI Member Picnic. What a great day for a picnic! Great food, great moon bounce and great company! I introduced myself to Doug, one of our newest members who joined GHI in September. Doug had played the Timpani in the Syracuse Symphony for 34 years and was excited to be in a warmer climate and happy to be in GHI close to many cultural events. Next I shared a table with Sterling, a veteran and a GHI member since 1959, who has been to the picnics for the last 10 years because he enjoys talking to other people.

Let's cheer our Member Outreach Committee and think about ways we can all contribute to our community. Check out all of GHI's committees at <http://www.ghi.coop/content/committees> and consider volunteering your talents to your co-op!

Member Announcements

Need Leaf Bags?

The City is no longer distributing leaf bags free of charge to GHI members. The City Finance Office, at 25 Crescent Road, sells paper yard waste bags: 10 for \$4 during business hours. Local grocery and hardware stores also carry the bags.

Daylight Savings Time and Smoke Detector Batteries

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, November 3rd. Please remember to change the batteries in your smoke detectors. **FACT:** *Roughly 2/3 of home fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.*

Home Sales

69 homes sold from January-September 2013

"I bought in GHI because it's a fun, quirky community and there were a lot of affordable houses." Alonzo Coleman, Plateau Place

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at the GHI Administration Offices on Hamilton Place, and are open to all GHI members. Dates are subject to change.

November

2	11:00 am	Pre-Purchase Orientation
4	2:00 pm	Bylaws Committee
4	7:00 pm	Member Outreach Committee
7	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
8	--	OFFICE CLOSED*
11	--	OFFICE CLOSED* (Veteran's Day)
12	7:00 pm	New Member Social
13	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
14	6:45 pm	Investment Committee
14	7:30 pm	Finance Committee
18	7:00 pm	Bylaws Committee
18	7:00 pm	Pre-Purchase Orientation
18	7:30 pm	Marketing Committee
19	8:30 am	Yard Line Committee
19	7:30 pm	Companion Animal Committee
19	7:30 pm	Nominations and Elections
20	7:00 pm	Woodlands Committee
20	7:00 pm	Buildings Committee
21	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
22	--	OFFICE CLOSED*
25	3:00 pm	Bylaws Committee
25	7:00 pm	Communications Committee
28 & 29	--	OFFICE CLOSED* (Thanksgiving)
30	11:00 am	Pre-Purchase Orientation

* Emergency maintenance service is available outside of normal hours or when GHI is closed. Call 301-474-6011.

FALL CONTRACT WORK

Gutter Cleaning Starts November 18th

Gilbert General Contractor, Inc. and Petria, Inc. will begin fall gutter cleaning and inspections, weather permitting, on November 18th. Weekly updates on the location of cleaning will be in the E-News each Monday throughout this time. During this process, workers will be on ladders around buildings. Please close your window shades to preserve privacy. You may contact Peter Joseph at (301) 474-4161 ext. 141 if you have any questions or comments.

Sidewalk Replacement and Repairs Begin

JMR Concrete was awarded the contract for the repair/replacement of sidewalks. Work begins this month.

New Member Coffee Social

If you joined the GHI community in 2013 and have not attended a coffee social, we invite you to a drop-in coffee social from 7- 9pm on Wednesday, November 12th.

Come and meet your neighbors!

Refreshments will be provided.