

22 March 2023

FORUM



Food Scraps and Yard Waste

by Dan Cook

dcook@conservationsolutions.com

Last year I volunteered to join the Transfer Station Action Committee and was assigned the task of collecting statistics on garbage and recycled goods at the Carlisle Transfer Station. Not the most exciting topic in the world, but then again you just might find this interesting.

I learned that food scraps and yard waste account for over 30% of what we throw away in the trash. Even more if we include paper and cardboard. The U.S. produces nearly 300 million tons of waste per year (about five pounds per person per day).

In 2022, Carlisle disposed of about 1,630 tons of trash at the Transfer Station and trash picked up by WIN Waste Innovations trucks from about 113 households. This does not include the good work we do recycling materials such as glass, tin/aluminum, textiles, plastic or paper, and cardboard—more about paper and cardboard later. That's about as much as two cargo ships, 13 adult blue whales, or six Boeing 747 airplanes. A lot of trash.

All this trash is delivered to WIN Waste Innovations where it eventually ends up in the North Andover Waste to Energy 40 Megawatt "Trash to Cash" plant. The trash is burned at the incinerator in North Andover. The organic waste portion of Carlisle trash—kitchen scraps, organic waste, paper, and cardboard is estimated to account for about 1,513,000 pounds of CO2 greenhouse gas emissions.

Carlisle pays a lot to dispose of its trash—about \$95 per ton in tipping fees and \$25/ton to transport the trash. That adds up to about \$227,300 per year. The per household Transfer Station fee is \$35 for one sticker and \$10 for additional stickers per household, or about \$50,000.

How can we help Carlisle reduce costs?

Food scraps and related organic wastes add up for Carlisle. Thirty percent, or 537 tons of the 1,630 tons of solid waste, is estimated to be food scraps and yard waste based on EPA numbers.

There are many ways to turn food scraps, yard waste, cardboard, and paper into "black gold". You can customize the composting method that best suits your time, space, and other preferences. Some of the methods include:

- A heaping pile of organic materials in a four-foot x four-foot x four-foot pile to get started. It should be three parts carbon (leaves, hay, shredded paper, cardboard, chipped brush) and one part nitrogen (vegetable and fruit waste, grass clippings, eggshells, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, and manure). Keep the compost pile damp—about 50% moisture. Aerate your compost pile with a pitchfork. Wait a few months and voila : you'll have highly productive great soil! You'll get to learn what works best over time.
- Compost bins—There are lots of different designs that work well and can best suit your needs.

Check out the MASS DEP website: www.mass.gov/doc/presentation-home-composting-for-zero-waste/download

Carlisle Route to Sustainability Fair on April 22

The Environmental and Sustainability Committee is celebrating Earth Day with the First Carlisle Route to Sustainability Fair in the center of town.

Get your own free composter at a discount or learn how to set up your own backyard composting system at no cost. The Transfer Station booth will have information on how to compost. In addition, we will have available ten **free** large home compost bins made of recycled plastic if you participate in our pilot program, and 40 **free** kitchen countertop compost pails. After the Sustainability Fair you can purchase these composters for a nominal fee.

See you all at the Transfer Station... hopefully with a lighter load as you leave more of those kitchen scraps, yard waste, shredded paper, and cardboard at home cooking in the composter. Δ