

Reusable News – Autumn Recycling Tips

It's that time of year when the best composter of all, Mother Earth, sets her wheels in motion to create next year's abundance of high grade, organic fertilizer. When raking leaves and cleaning out gardens, your organic waste can be a goldmine of nutrients. Why buy manufactured fertilizers when nature gives it to you for free? Whether you have a simple pile in a corner of your yard or a compost bin (on sale at transfer stations and DPW facility at Camelot Park for \$32.50), using your own organic waste as fertilizer closes the most natural loop in earth's wonderful cycle of sustainability.

Thinking about creating a new garden for next spring? Now is the time to do it without digging or tilling. Permaculture is a great way to recycle newspapers and cardboard, and create a new garden or expand an existing one with very little labor. Stake out your area, and put down layers of newspaper (at least 6-8 pages thick) or cardboard. Wet the paper and then cover it with a thick layer of mulch or compost (or straw or seaweed), and voila! Without disturbing nature's underground network of rhizomes, worms and organisms, you have created a rich garden that will be ready to plant next spring. This system is also very effective for keeping weeds down in existing gardens.

Halloween will be here soon, and pumpkins will turn into jack-o-lanterns. Roasted pumpkin seeds are a seasonal delight everyone can enjoy. Instead of tossing those seeds, put them on an oiled (2 Tbls of oil) cookie sheet sprinkle with salt (course salt is best), and toss with a spatula to coat the seeds. Bake at 250 for about 45 minutes, tossing every now and then. A yummy, healthy treat! And when the jack-o-lantern has done his duty, throw it on the compost or chuck it in the woods. Squirrels love pumpkin.

Help kids learn the joy of recycling by creating Halloween costumes and decorations from reused materials. Encourage kids to make their own costumes of recycled things. Not only does it help the environment by not buying some Chinese-made artificial product that used fossil fuels to get here, it fosters creativity, invention and thrift. It's amazing what can be made from old clothing, cardboard, paper bags, meat trays, string, and tin foil. For ideas, Google "recycled materials Halloween costumes."

Empty tin cans make great lanterns. Fill the clean can with water and freeze overnight. When the can is filled with solid ice, make a design by punching holes with a nail and hammer. Paint the can or leave it plain for a pewter look. Put a candle in each one, and line your driveway or path.

Old clothes make the perfect scarecrow. Take an unusable pair of jeans, some worn out sneakers and a tattered shirt, stuff with straw, newspaper or leaves. Make the head from a paper bag filled with leaves, and put an old hat on top. Scarecrows make great occupants for the autumn yardscape. When it's time to retire him, he can find a resting place at the bottom of your compost heap.

Recycling isn't just about taking your cans, bottles, plastics, paper, and such to the transfer station, it's about using the stuff we already have to make new things, be it turning leaves into rich compost or giving old things a new life instead of sending them into the waste stream.

The Reusable News is a monthly column by the Selectmen's Recycling Advisory Committee. This article was written by committee chair, Heidi Mayo.