

Environment

Composting for Fun and Food At Lake Arrowhead Country Club

BY RICK ZIMMERMAN
Special to the Mountain News

Composting brings to mind something our grandparents used to do to inexpensively fertilize their backyard vegetables and Victory gardens. As people have acquired an understanding the many benefits of composting, this process has made a resurgence with home gardeners in recent years.

Many people believed that the process was too complicated, messy, and created a bad odor. None of this is true. Composting is great for the garden and great for the environment, and is often referred to as "black gold."

Compost is organic material added to soil to assist with plant growth. It is nature's waste management process to recycle nutrients into the ecosystem. This humus is the best soil builder, and is comprised of green and brown vegetation. It also retains moisture, and suppresses plant disease and pests.

This trash takes up space in the landfills and rots to emit potent greenhouse gases such as methane, CO2 and Nitrous Oxide. Methane is roughly 30 times more potent than CO2, according to a Princeton study.

At the Lake Arrowhead Country Club (LACC), Chef Kathleen Sharkey was faced with a problem of what to do with the kitchen scraps they were throwing away, and also how to supplement organic produce for the kitchen. The solution was to create a large tiered organic garden and



LACC

Gardens grown with composted materials produce healthier plants, and provide trace minerals not usually available in chemical fertilizers. These fruits, vegetables, herbs and edible flowers are used in LACC's cuisine.



LACC

Composted soil helps herbs grow better, providing a fresh resource for the kitchen's outstanding cuisine. Basil lives in the shade below.

Green vegetation consists of kitchen vegetable scraps, grass clippings, fruit scraps, coffee grounds and other vegetation, and provides nitrogen.

Brown vegetation consists of dead leaves, branches and twigs, and provides carbon. Green and brown vegetation should be used in equal amounts with enough moisture to continue the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi breaking down the organic matter.

Gardens grown with composted materials produce healthier plants, and provide trace minerals not usually available in chemical fertilizers. Chemical fertilizers can be expensive, and can burn the roots. Chemical fertilizers can over-stimulate plants, leading to other negative effects.

Organic fertilizers such as compost break down quickly, do not burn the roots, and promote a more natural growth pattern.

Food scraps and yard waste comprise 20 to 30 percent of what we throw in the trash. It could be composted instead.

start composting the kitchen vegetation.

The kitchen staff contributed to constructing the garden area, and continues to assist in maintaining the effort. Currently the garden grows numerous herbs, chilies, lettuces, kale, beets, sunflowers, strawberries, and edible flowers, among other fruits and vegetables. All are used in Chef Kathleen's cuisine.

Golf course grass clippings, leaves and wood debris are not used in the kitchen composting process, due to the various fertilizers and chemicals used. These are composted in a separate

section of the property, and used to augment the turf areas.

The other hero is a rescue rabbit named Basil. Her job is to help eat various healthy kitchen vegetation scraps, and make quality rabbit pellets for fertilizer. Rabbit pellets are one of the best organic fertilizers. They are dry, odorless, and not known to transmit any disease to humans. They are very rich in nitrogen and phosphorous. These break down quickly when composted and do not burn the plant roots.

Chemical fertilizers are strong, and do not provide the trace minerals that organic fertilizers have. Basil is very spoiled, and she deserves the attention for her contributions to the environment and the Lake Arrowhead Country Club.



LACC

Chef Kathleen Sharkey and her kitchen staff at the Lake Arrowhead Country Club rescued this rabbit, named her Basil, and uses her pellets as a contribution of nitrogen and phosphorous to the compost mix.

Conservation Fund Wins Majority in U.S. House

BY HEIDI FRON
Reporter

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which has been instrumental in achieving project goals of the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust (SBMLT), throughout California and across America, surpassed a major hurdle when the U.S. House of Representatives voted July 18 to reject an amendment that would have cut funding for the program.

LWCF has protected iconic landscapes and waterways across America, scenic redwood forests and other woodlands in California, as well as the San Bernardino National Forest (SBNF).

U.S. Representative Andy Biggs of Arizona authored the amendment, which would have transferred LWCF funding from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to deferred maintenance needs of the National Park Ser-

vice. Those maintenance projects were considered to be a mere fraction of the NPS needs.

The amendment was offered to the Department of the Interior in an appropriations bill, but strong bipartisan support for LWCF resulted in a major victory for conservation of outdoor places and recreation programs.

The successful LWCF program costs the American taxpayer nothing, and last Wednesday's strong bipartisan vote demonstrates that Congress is honoring the original commitment of using those funds to continue creating and protecting the outdoor places Americans love most.

Jim Asher, president of SBMLT, explained that the SBMLT has for more than 20 years been finding "private land holders inside the national forest desiring to divest themselves of the



HEIDI FRON

Jim Asher

burdens of ownership and wishing their properties to forever remain parts of the magnificent conserved natural forest. SBMLT has acquired many beautiful (natural but threatened) parcels throughout the forest, to be protected and managed until sale to the U.S. Forest Service. Sale to the forest service depends upon its funding by the LWCF. This revolving cooperative sequence has made possible the nonprofit land trust's being instrumental in placing well over 12,000 acres into the permanent public conservation of the SBNF."

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