

Compost Drop-Off At Market

Station Gives Residents Chance To Recycle Organic Waste

By ALEDA JOHNSON

Daily News-Record Green-hearted Friendly City residents now have a way to compost without doing any work themselves as The Climate Action Alliance of the Valley and the Harrisonburg Farmers Market partner to offer a Saturday market compost drop-off station.

Composting program organizer Adrie Voors wanted to start the collection when she heard about a similar program in Charlottesville.

“I spent a day with the Charlottesville city market to see how they did it, and it ran really well,” Voors said. “It seemed like something we could do here and [Harrisonburg market manager] Josie Showalter was very supportive.”

The project, which runs through October, allows patrons to pick up free compostable bags at the farmers market to collect organic kitchen waste for a week before returning to the market between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. the following Saturday.

The waste is then collected by Black Bear Composting in Crimora to be composted in their commercial facility that can handle more than a backyard pile.

“A lot of people have land for a backyard compost pile, but it can’t handle animal scraps, paper, compostable plastics or disposable serviceware because the pile doesn’t get hot enough to break it down,” Voors said. “But at a commercial facility, the huge compost piles generate a lot of heat and are stirred enough to turn those materials into organic debris.” The only thing they won’t accept at the Saturday compost drop off is animal feces.

Voors hopes the program appeals to those living in apartments and townhouses who don’t have a backyard for their own composting.

Each Saturday, the waste collected is weighed, and Voors asks participants to mark which neighborhood they came from to help with future project planning.

Voors has been collecting about 150 pounds of waste a week and sees more people pick up bags each week.

“We did all this with the ideal of having curbside compost service or neighborhood bins to pool their resources because not everyone can make it to the market each week,” she said.

And the compost collection is only half the goal,

See **COMPOST**, Page **B5** “Compost does so much for the soil such as retain water, provide nutrients and suppress weeds.”

— ADRIE VOORS

PROGRAM ORGANIZER



Bill Voige drops off a bag of compostable material to Adrie Voors at the Harrisonburg Farmers Market in April. The composting project, organized by Voors, allows patrons to pick up free compostable bags at the market to collect organic kitchen waste in before returning the bag between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. the following Saturday.

Carl Droms / Courtesy Photo



A bin fills up at the Saturday farmers market in Harrisonburg in April. The waste is collected by Black Bear Composting in Crimora to be composted in their commercial facility.

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Organizer Says Best Part Is Seeing It Come Full Circle

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according to Voors. The other half is education and outreach.

“I’m not fooling myself into thinking I can divert such a significant amount to make much of a difference,” she said. “But everyone now gets that option to keep their organic waste out of the waste stream.”

Up to 50 percent of waste in landfills could be turned into compost, which can then be used again.

“Compost does so much for the soil such as retain water, provide nutrients and suppress weeds,” Voors said. “In the landfill, the organic wastes release methane and contribute to climate change, so [composting] seems like such a no-brainer.”

So the best part of composting is when it comes full circle.

On the first day of her compost collection, Voors said, she was approached by one of the vendors admitting he used the compost from Black Bear Composting to farm with.

“He’s using the compost to grow the vegetables people are buying, and those peels and scraps are being composted to be used again,” she said. “It made me happy to see the full cycle of nutrients, from being composted to end up right back to the farmers at the market.”

For more information about the compost station, visit climateactionallianceofthevalley.org.

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Adrie Voors, program organizer, weighs a large donation. Each Saturday, the waste collected is weighed, and Voors asks participants to mark which neighborhood they came from to help with future project planning.

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