

Kids Korner

Children Take Compost Quiz

CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Young visitors to the Recycling Education Program's booth at the recent Montgomery County 4-H Fair were asked for a definition of compost, what it smells like, and how it is made. Their answers were descriptive, accurate, and to the point.

When asked what compost smells like, the answers ranged from "it smells like my grandmother's woods," "like insects," "flowers and oranges," "nature of the world," to "soil, but sweet." Emily, age 6, disagreed. She thought it smelled yucky.

Thomas at age 10 must be a veteran composter. Asked what is compost, he replied, "Compost is leaves, grass and other natural items mixed together to form soil for plants to grow in." Catherine describes compost as "old things that people don't want anymore so they recycle," while Ford, age 6, was right to the point. He said it means "something is rotten," and Christine said it was "leftover food."

The children certainly know how to compost. Katie, 11, instructs us to "put dirt in a pile with potato peels, grass, leaves, other things that can be decom-

posed. Wait for 8-9 months, maybe more, and you will have compost for your garden." Christina, 6, is more direct: "Throw it in a pile, then it breaks down." Aaron, 9, wants us to "grind up dirt, trees, I think."

Promotion of backyard composting for all age groups is one of the goals of the Recycling Education Program. If the many children who took a few minutes to answer the compost questions are any indication, their generation is on the right track towards environmental awareness and good recycling practices.

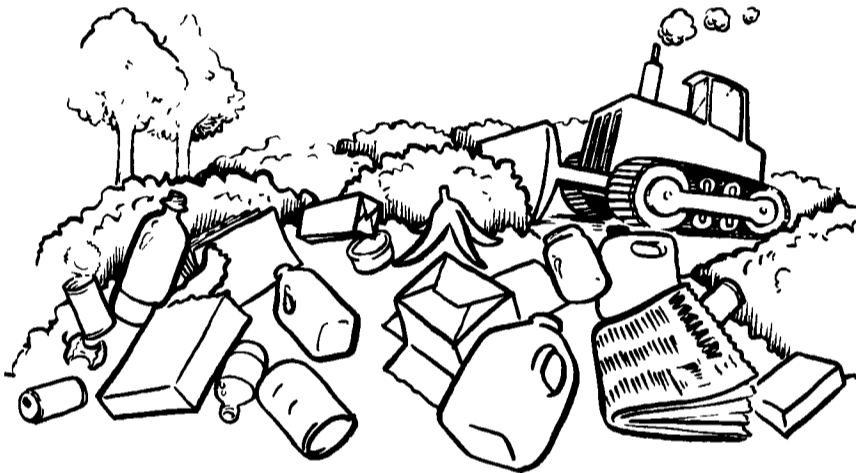
Have you thought about your trash lately?

Most people don't think about where trash comes from or where it goes. Did you know that every person creates about four pounds of trash each day? In one week that is nearly thirty five pounds - the weight of a very fat turkey. If you imagine all the people you know, that is a lot of turkeys!



More than half of the things that get thrown away can be saved, reused or made into new things. The Environmental Shopper does not create four pounds of trash a day, because he or she knows what to buy and what not to buy. The best way to get rid of all those turkeys is to start with yourself.

Look at the picture below. It's a landfill where trash is buried. Most of your trash will end up in this pile. There are about 6000 landfills in the United States to hold all the trash.



Why is there so much trash? One reason is because we buy things that use too much packaging made from paper, cardboard, plastic and polystyrene foam - styrofoam. Things look so good on the shelf; we have trouble resisting them.

Color the things that you think can be saved from the trash pile.

Reduce

Here's a game you can play in your home.

There are four squares below with the numbers 1, 2, 3 or 4 in them. Each number stands for the number of layers of packaging used for an item. For example, cereal uses cardboard and a bag so it goes in the #2 box. Look at the list of items (under the boxes) and try to put them in the right box.

1	2	3	4
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LIST

milk juice packs bread fruit crayons pack of gum
cereal music tapes video cassette games

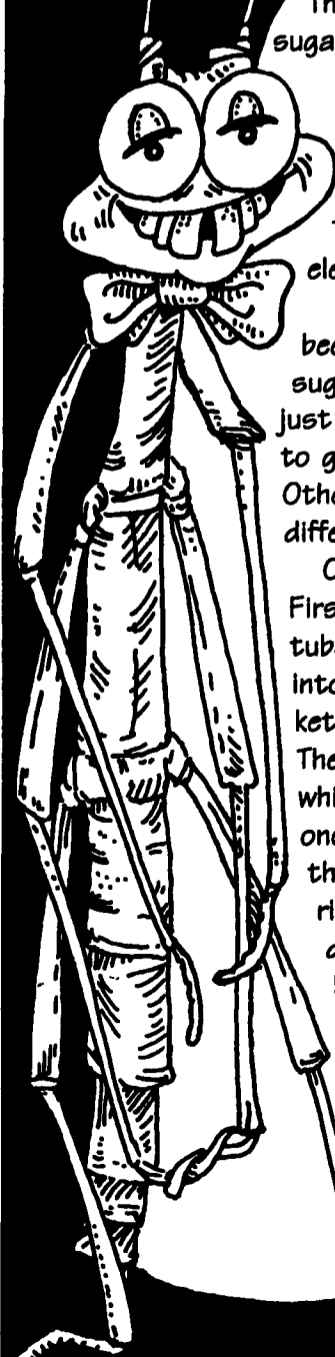
To check your answers, find these items around your house or check the answer key in the back. Most of these items used two or more layers. Some layers are there to protect the item. Some layers are there to make the product look good. If fewer layers were used, people would have less to throw away. You should try to decide what is needed to protect an item and what is there for looks.

Reject

Look at the list of products in the activity above. Some things are packaged different ways by different makers. For example, fruit is sometimes available in bulk in large bins and other times it is found prepackaged in plastic or paper trays. Certain cereals sometimes also have an outer plastic wrapping. Cereal variety packs also have an outer wrap and lots of cardboard and paper for a small amount of cereal. Look around the next time you go to the store and you'll see many examples of the same type of product packaged in different ways. An E.S. looks to buy only those items that have the least packaging. Buy, and encourage others to buy, the things that have the least packaging. REJECT unnecessary packaging.

Smart Stuff

WITH TWIG WALKINGSTICK



How is cotton candy made?

There's no cotton in this candy — it's 100 percent sugar (and a little coloring, and maybe even some flavoring). Sugar can be changed into a lot of different shapes when its ingredients — the elements carbon, hydrogen and oxygen — are heated or ground. (Just like water, ice and crushed ice are all different forms of water.) The sugar takes on that feathery look when the elements change the way they hook together.

Manufacturers squeeze out sweet juices from sugar beets and sugar cane. They filter and cook it into the sugar you buy in the grocery store. In some cases, they just grind up one kind (like table sugar) a little bit more to get a different kind of sugar (like powdered sugar.) Other sugars, like brown sugar, require a completely different process.

Cotton candy could be the ultimate sugar shape-shifter. First, candy makers use a special kettle that has a hollow tube in the center with tiny holes at the top. Sugar melts into a warm, syrupy liquid inside the tube. Then, the kettle spins fast, pushing the syrup out the tiny holes. The force of the kettle spinning pushes air into the sugar, which cools the syrup into a solid and also makes the once-granular sugar look like long, feathery glass threads. But it's definitely a science to get it right. If the syrup gets too hot, or the threads don't cool quickly enough, all the candy maker has is a gloppy mess!

Scientifically yours, Twig

