



Eco-Friendly LIVING

story by Lorraine Barber

Eco-friendly living brings attention to how our lifestyle affects the Earth and how we care for the Earth's natural resources. If you are on the fence about California "going green," then you may wonder what all the hype is about. In September 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 1383- the Organic Waste Methane Emissions Reduction law. It is the most significant waste reduction requirement law in over 30 years. SB 1383 requires California to reduce the amount of organic waste to 75% by 2025. Organic waste includes; food waste, lawn clippings, yard debris-softwood and plant trimmings, and fibers, such as paper and cardboard.

According to Yolo County's website, Californians throw away more than 6 million tons of organic food waste annually. The Organic Waste Emissions Reduction law requires communities to conserve 20% of disposed edible food for human consumption. Organic food waste, frequently considered perishables by local supermarkets and restaurants, is now being distributed to individuals and food banks. Food manufacturers, supermarkets, farmers, and brokers donate to local non-profit food banks. Additionally, restaurants, caterers, hotel dining rooms, and other food establishments promptly give perishable and prepared foods to those needing a nutritious meal.

When you walk through the forest, a park, or on a trail and consider the soil beneath your feet and the freshwater as it flows in nearby streams, lakes, and rivers, you realize how essential it

is for our livelihood. Understanding our environment requires knowing the four survival elements: air, sunlight, water, and soil.

It is hard to comprehend 8 billion people living on the 3rd rock from the Sun. Looking at the Earth from outer space is captivating, and there is a feeling of appreciation for the natural beauty of our planet. The Earth's surface is covered with vast oceans (96.5%), but only a small portion of water, approximately 1%, is available to sustain life. The amount of usable topsoil to grow crops to maintain the food needed to support life is a meager 3.5%. Conservation of these resources will continue to provide humankind with water, food, fiber, and shelter for future generations.

Composting organic waste creates sustainable living and food security for communities. The Earth's limited soil and water support humankind, and as the population grows primarily in underdeveloped countries, education and conservation methods are more important than ever. When you observe the environment, you realize our resources are finite, and scientists are bringing our attention to the urgency of conservation methods before it is too late.

According to CalRecycle, statistics indicate 1 in 5 individuals in California go to bed hungry every night. The pandemic food assistance program, P-EBT Public Health Emergency status, ended May 11, 2023. Placer Food Bank states that over the last two years, food assistance requests have increased by 50% due to

the pandemic, job losses, illness, and struggles with inflation. As the pandemic food assistance program ended, food banks began bracing for increased demand for food assistance. Government and local non-profits are working together to implement solutions to support individuals, families, and older adults struggling to put food on the table. The City of Roseville works diligently with community organizations and businesses to ensure that perishable food feeds those in need.

The Placer County Food Bank website indicates 30% of seniors in our region choose between food or paying for medication or medical care. SB 1383 requires all counties to initiate recycling programs to redirect edible food currently being disposed of to feed those in need. Recovering one ton of palatable food can provide more than 1600 meals to individuals who are food deprived. The City of Roseville assists with food recovery in the community by coordinating with local food banks, soup kitchens, corporations, and food recovery organizations.

Not only does recycling organic waste help feed people, but there are also environmental benefits by saving our resources. In the United States, the annual food loss and waste could figuratively cover a combined area of agricultural land the size of California and New York. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), America's food waste is enough to feed thousands of people and provide energy to power 50 million homes annually.

"Incorporating sustainability into your lifestyle means becoming aware of the impact of your choices in food, products, and energy use." — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists the benefits of composting organic waste:

Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Greenhouse gas emissions have significantly contributed to the rise in the Earth's temperature, and over 85 percent of greenhouse gas emissions from landfilled food waste result from activities before disposal, including production, transport, processing, and distribution. To reduce these emissions, we need to prevent food from being wasted in the first place.

Reduces Methane from Landfills – When food goes to the landfill, the nutrients in the food never return to the soil. Food decomposes and produces methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than CO₂, and is trapped by heat in the atmosphere.

Returns Nutrients to the Soil –Composting food waste creates a usable soil medium to improve the nutrients in the soil. Composting food waste improves the soil for next year's crops and water quality.

"To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations."

— The United States Environmental Protection Agency.

The City of Roseville uses a Materials Recovery Facility to separate recyclables and organic food waste from the trash. Customers in Roseville will continue to use the trash bin for all food waste and the green waste for yard and garden clippings. Organic food waste is recovered directly at the Materials Recovery Facility and recycled into compost. Each county chooses specific recycling requirements for residents in their region. The City of Roseville is not using the curbside organic cans for recycling that Sacramento County currently uses. Roseville will continue to evaluate its success at obtaining the required 75% organic waste reduction mandated goal by 2025. Upon final assessment of the current program, Roseville may consider moving to an organic curbside program in three to five years. The City of Roseville will provide information in advance if there are changes to the current recycling program.

We can become better stewards of our environment by being aware of how our lifestyle impacts the Earth. The importance of conserving our resources is the primary goal of becoming an eco-friendly community. We care for our health by eating healthy foods and exercising, and we can make our environment eco-friendly by creating an Earth-friendly existence. Starting a new habit is challenging, and it takes a few weeks to get into the eco-friendly groove for the Earth. Feeding more people is worth the effort; every little bit helps, and we, as a community, can do it!

