

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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### **Composting Technology Has Changed**

Today's column is a change from the usual legislative topics of Beacon Hill. Instead of writing about laws and regulations, I am going to suggest that you take part in an environmental program that I learned about from a press release last week. That program makes available - at a modest cost - home composting units for the processing of kitchen and yard waste.

When I was a child my father, an avid gardener, built a compost pile of chicken wire with a wooden frame. I thought of that structure last week while reading about the newest technology in composting. Believe me, the Earth Machine and the Brave New Composter are quite a change from the simple unit of years gone by.

Composting itself has not changed. Organic waste from yard work can be mixed with coffee grounds and other food waste. The waste then decomposes, converting itself into fertilizing mulch over a period of six months to a year. In addition to providing the upscale equipment for composting, CET supplies instructions that advise you on optimizing the process. It also offers - a free workshop on composting.

Both models are made of polyethylene, and in keeping with their environmentally sound function, that polyethylene has been recycled. In this year when disposal of grass clippings has become a political issue, home composting offers a new alternative to the town's continuing quest for a disposal area. Unlike the bags of grass that collect in my garage, the promotional data that accompanies the new composting bins claim the process can be odor-free.

The Earth Machine, priced at \$20, is billed as North America's most advanced composter, while the Brave New Composter, for \$15, boasts of its adjustable sizing to fit different space needs. Each unit needs some assembly but no tools, according to promotional materials. An equipment grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection supports the distribution project, and each sale funds the purchase of another unit.

If you are interested in securing a bin for your yard, you will need to do some advanced planning. Bins will be available Saturday, July 24, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Big Y parking lot at the corner of Wilbraham Road and Breckwood Boulevard. The units must be reserved at least a day ahead by phoning CET at 1-800-238-1221 (The organization is doing a brisk business, so keep trying if the line is busy.)

Samples of both bins are on display at the Longmeadow Recycling Center so that you can decide which one to order. That location provides an appropriate unity to today's ecology protection movement. The units are made by Massachusetts companies from plastic detergent bottles that may well have entered the recycling market stream at that same recycling center. If you undertake the challenge of creating your own compost pile, please let me know how it helps next year's garden grow.