



DON'T THROW OUT that carrot top! Compost it.

THERE'S AN IDEA

Good Dirt

San Francisco turns scraps into gold.

THE IDEA Devoted gardeners across the country turn food scraps into compost in their backyards, but San Francisco collects waste for composting citywide – about 300 tons a day. More than 2,000 businesses and nearly 150,000 residences separate their trash into color-coded bins: green for food and yard waste; blue for recyclable paper, bottles, and cans; and black for the rest. The city makes it cheaper for businesses to dispose of food and yard waste than regular garbage; it's free for households. Food wastes are hauled to a facility outside of San Francisco and turned into commercial compost that is sold to California wineries and organic farmers.

WHY BOSTON NEEDS IT Landfill space is scarce and expensive in Massachusetts, and buried wastes – even food scraps – generate pollutants and greenhouse gases that promote climate change. Diverting food waste from landfills also creates jobs for compost producers and extracts value from trash. Now, won't that appeal to frugal Yankees?

PROBABILITY This idea might actually take root. Some Boston-area businesses, including the Comfort Inn at Logan Airport and the Charles Hotel in Cambridge, already separate food wastes for composting, with the scraps being picked up by a private hauler. If the city of Boston can find ways to collect organic waste efficiently and affordably, other hotels would sign up, according to the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Conventions, which worked with businesses to promote green practices during the Democratic National Convention.

Sumner Martinson, who directs composting programs for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, says the agency is looking into ways to make large-scale composting possible.

If citywide composting happens in Boston, then we would really be the land of the bean and the cod.

– Jennifer Weeks



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